

Mrs. Charles L. Mich.
1173 Fillmore Street,
Topeka, Kansas.









LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH. From the portrait by Ferrand, 1760.

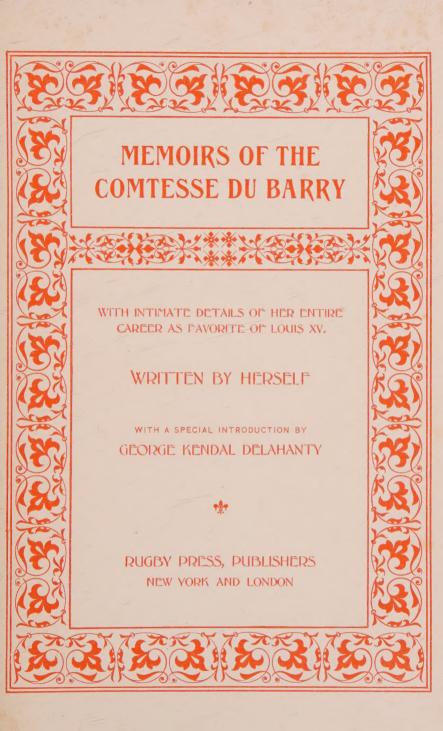




TABLE OF CONTENTS

	CHAPTER XXIV.	PAGE
]	prince des Deux Ponts—Prince Max—The dauphin and Marie Antoinette—The comtesse du Barry and Bridget Rupert—The countess and Geneviève Mathon—Noël—Fresh amours—Nocturnal adventure—Conclusion of this intrigue.	223
	CHAPTER XXV.	
(] 2	ame du Barry succeeds in alienating Louis XV. from the duc de Choiseul—Letter from madame de Grammont—Louis XV.—The chancellor and the countess—Louis XV. and the abbé de la Ville—The maréchale de Mirepoix and madame du Barry.	234
	CHAPTER XXVI.	
1 S J	n d'Oigny, general post-master—The king and the countess read the opened letters—The disgrace of de Choiseul re- solved upon— <i>Lettre de cachet</i> —Anecdote—Spectre of Philip II., king of Spain—The duc de Choiseul banished —Visits to Chanteloup—The princesses—The dauphin and dauphiness—Candidates for the ministry	243
	CHAPTER XXVII.	
t a s	omte de la Marche and the comtesse du Barry—The countess and the prince de Condé—The duc de la Vauguyon and the countess—Provisional minister—Refusal of the secretaryship of war—Displeasure of the king—The maréchale de Mirepoix—Unpublished letter from Voltaire to madame du Barry—Her reply	253
	CHAPTER XXVIII.	
Ċ V F	words respecting Jean Jacques Rousseau—The comtesse du Barry is desirous of his acquaintance—The countess visits Jean Jacques Rousseau—His household furniture—His portrait—Thérèse—A second visit from madame du Barry to Jean Jacques Rousseau—The countess relates her visit to the king—Billet from J. J. Rousseau to madame du Barry—The two duchesses d'Aiguillon	262

CHAPTER XXIX.	PAGE
The king's friends—The duc de Fronsac—The duc d'Ayen's remark—Manner of living at court—The marquis de Dreux—Brézé—Education of Louis XV.—The Parc-aux-Cerfs—Its household—Its inmates—Mère Bompart—Livres expended on the Parc-aux-Cerfs—Good advice—Madame.	275
CHAPTER XXX.	
Fête given by the comtesse de Valentinois—The comtesse du Barry feigns an indisposition—Her dress—The duc de Cossé—The comte and comtesse de Provence—Dramatic entertainment—Favart and Voisenon—A few observations—A pension—The maréchale de Luxembourg—Adventure of M. de Bombelles—Copy of a letter addressed to him—Louis XV.—M. de Maupeou and madame du Barry	283
CHAPTER XXXI.	
Madame du Barry purchases the services of Marin the gazetteer—Louis XV. and madame de Rumas—M. de Rumas and the comtesse du Barry—An intrigue—Dénouement—A present upon the occasion—The duc de Richelieu in disgrace—100,000 livres	295
CHAPTER XXXII.	
A prefatory remark—Madame Brillant—The maréchale de Lux- embourg's cat—Despair of the maréchale—The ambas- sador, Beaumarchais, and the duc de Chaulnes—The comte d'Aranda—Louis XV. and his relics—The abbé de Beauvais—His sermons—He is appointed bishop	307
CHAPTER XXXIII.	
M. D—n and madame de Blessac—Anecdote—The rendezvous and the ball—The wife of Gaubert—They wish to give her to the king—Intrigues—Their results—Letter from the duc de la Vrillière to the countess—Reply—Reconciliation	316
CHAPTER XXXIV.	
Conversation with the king—Marriage of the comte d'Artois —Intrigues—The place of lady of honor—The maréchale de Mirepoix—The comtesse de Forcalquier and madame du Barry—The comtesse de Forcalquier and madame Boncault	322

CHAPTER XXXV.

Marriage of madame Boncault—The comte de Bourbon Busset
—Marriage of comte d'Hargicourt—Disgrace of the comte

de Broglie—He is replaced by M. Lemoine—The king complains of ennui—Conversations on the subject—Entry into Paris	33I
CHAPTER XXXVI.	
Visit from a stranger—Madame de Pompadour and a Jacobinical monk—Continuation of this history—Deliverance of a state prisoner—A meeting with the stranger	339
CHAPTER XXXVII.	
A conspiracy—A scheme for poisoning madame du Barry— The four bottles—Letter to the duc d'Aiguillon—Advice of the ministers—Opinion of the physicians—The chan- cellor and lieutenant of police—Resolution of the council.	347
CHAPTER XXXVIII.	
Conclusion of this affair—A letter from the incognita—Her examination—Arrest of Cabert the Swiss—He dies in the Bastille of poison—Madame Lorimer is arrested and poisoned—The innocence of the Jesuits acknowledged—Madame de Mirepoix and the 100,000 francs—Forgetfulness on the part of the lieutenant of police—A visit from comte Jean—Madame de Mirepoix	356
CHAPTER XXXIX.	
My alarms—An élève of the Parc-aux-Cerfs—Comte Jean endeavours to direct the king's ideas—A supper at Trianon—Table talk—The king is seized with illness—His conversation with me—The joiner's daughter and the small-pox—My despair—Conduct of La Martinière the surgeon.	366
CHAPTER XL.	
La Martinière causes the king to be removed to Versailles— The young prophet appears again to madame du Barry— Prediction respecting cardinal de Richelieu—The joiner's daughter requests to see madame du Barry—Madame de Mirepoix and the 50,000 francs—A soirée in the salon of madame du Barry	380
CHAPTER XLI.	

Interview with the joiner's daughter—Consultation of the physicians respecting the king—The small-pox declares itself—The comte de Muy—The princesses—Extreme sensi-

	PAGE
bility of madame de Mirepoix—The king is kept in ignorance of his real condition—The archbishop of Paris visits Versailles	394
CHAPTER XLII.	
First proceedings of the council—The dauphin receives the prelates with great coolness—Situation of the archbishop of Paris—Richelieu evades the project for confessing the king—The friends of madame du Barry come forward—The English physician—The abbé Terray—Interview with the prince de Soubise—The prince and the courtiers—La Martinière informs the king of France the true nature of his complaint—Consequences of this disclosure	407
CHAPTER XLIII.	
Terror of the king—A complication—Filial piety of the princesses—Last interview between madame du Barry and Louis XV.—Conversation with the maréchale de Mirepoix—The chancellor Maupeou—The fragment—Comte Jean.	420
CHAPTER XLIV.	
The duc d'Aiguillon brings an order for the immediate departure of madame du Barry—The king's remarks recapitulated—The countess holds a privy council—Letter to madame de Mirepoix and the ducs de Cossé and d'Aiguillon—Night of departure—Ruel—Visit from madame de Forcalquier	426
CHAPTER XLV.	
The duc d'Aiguillon's first letter—The maréchale de Mirepoix—A second letter from the duc d'Aiguillon—Numerous visitors.	433
CHAPTER XLVI.	
A third letter from the duke—The king receives extreme unction—Letter from madame Victoire to the dauphin—M. de Machault—A promenade with the duc de Cossé—Kind attention from the prince des Deux Ponts—A fourth letter from the duc d'Aiguillon—Comte Jean bids me farewell—M. d'Aiguillon's fifth letter, containing an account of the death of Louis XV.—The duc de la Vrillière—The Lettre de cachet—Letter to the queen—Departure for the abbey of Pont aux Dames	436

CHAPTER XXIV.

The prince des Deux Ponts—Prince Max—The dauphin and Marie Antoinette—The comtesse du Barry and Brigitta Rupert—The countess and Geneviève Mathon.

OT all my friends were as treacherous as the duc de Villeroi, and I may gratefully assert I have possessed many true and sincere ones who have ever faithfully adhered to my fortunes. One in particular I shall mention here, that I may recommend him to your warmest esteem; for although of high and distinguished rank, he did not despise the good opinion of the meanest citizen. I speak of the prince des Deux Ponts, Charles Auguste Christian. This prince, who chanced to visit France during the zenith of my court favor, was very desirous of seeing me, and both he and his brother were presented to me by the comte de la Marche, their friend, and they quickly requested the honor of my friendship. Auguste Christian pleased me most by his gentle and amiable manners, although most persons gave the preference to his brother, Maximilian Joseph, better known by the name of prince Max. Auguste Christian, in the fervor of his attachment, speaking openly to me of the delicacy of the situation, proposed to me, in case of any reverse, that I should seek an asylum in his dominions; and I must do him the justice to say that at the death of the king, far from forgetting his proffer, he lost no time in reminding me of it. Fidelity and attachment such as his are sufficiently rare to merit a place in my journal. The prince des Deux Ponts was presumptive heir to an immense inheritance, that of the electorate of Bavaria, and the electorate Palatine, to the latter of which he was direct heir after the decease of his cousin, the present elector. I could almost wish that he had already

succeeded to these possessions; he can never reign too soon for the happiness of his subjects.

Prince Max had served in France; he was extremely well looked upon at court both by the king and the princesses. As for the dauphiness, prejudiced against him as she was by her mother, she naturally regarded him with an eye of cool mistrust, and manifested her open dislike by never inviting him to any of her parties. Prince Max spoke of this pointed neglect to the king, who immediately summoned the dauphin. "My son," said he to him, "I see with regret that prince Max is never an invited guest at any of your balls and fêtes. Remember, he belongs to a family which has been our most ancient ally, and do not take up the quarrels of a house which, until your marriage, has ever been disposed in deadly hatred to us."

If the dauphin was not gifted with a very extensive capacity, he was possessed of sufficient plain sense to comprehend and to enter into the views of his grandfather, to whom he pledged his word that henceforward prince Max should be treated with more respect; and he kept his word, for the instant he returned to his apartments he commanded the duc de la Vauguyon to add the name of prince Max to the list of invited persons. When the paper was drawn out it was carried to the dauphiness, who was with her husband. She read on till she came to the name of prince Max, which she desired might be erased, but the dauphin interfered. "Oblige me," cried he, "by suffering this name to remain; his ancestors have for ages been the friends of our family, and his alliance may one day be useful to us in Germany."

The dauphiness comprehended the signification of these words, and her fine eyes were filled with tears. However, she no longer insisted upon the erasure, when her husband, who most tenderly loved her, further declared it to be the king's desire that nothing should be done which could in any way displease the prince des Deux

Ponts. He was, therefore, from that period invited to the house of Marie Antoinette, who indemnified herself for this compulsory civility by refusing to bestow upon him one single smile or gracious word. It must indeed be agreed that the dauphiness had brought with her into France too many Austrian notions which she was long in losing for those of a wife and mother; but now, at the moment of my writing this, she is much changed and is as true a Frenchwoman as if she had been born and bred in Paris. Unfortunately, the people appear slow in giving her credit for her altered opinions, and to this mistake will she owe the loss of that general love and popularity to which she has such just claims.

Prince Auguste Christian entertained for me a sincere regard, which I returned with the truest friendship. My feelings were as pure and simple as his own, spite of the odious calumnies with which my enemies have attacked this harmless acquaintance; but their slander in this matter was no worse than the manner in which they spoke of every person who visited me. According to their report, I was the mistress of all who presented themselves. 'Tis well for you, ye courtly dames, that you may convert friends into lovers with impunity; be the number ever so large, none dares arraign your conduct; but for those of more humble pretensions it is indeed considered atrocious to number more than two admirers; should we ask to swell the list to a third—what comments, what scandal, what vilifying reports are in circulation!

In this letter, my friend, I shall speak to you exclusively of myself. You will find little in my conduct to praise and, I fear, much to blame. You will easily perceive my heart was better than my head; and, dear as your opinion is to me, I write on in the hope that should my candid avowal lose me any portion of your esteem it will yet obtain me a larger share of your friendship.

The dismissal of Sophie from my service occasioned a vacancy in my household. As soon as her departure

was known I received numberless solicitations from all who heard of it. Three days afterwards Henriette came to inform me that the wife of an attorney of Châtelet solicited the task of serving me in Sophie's stead, that she was a well-looking and respectable person, and might very probably suit me.

"Will you see her, madame?" continued Henriette. "She is recommended by the marchioness de Montmorency."

"Willingly," answered I; "desire her to come in." Henriette left me and quickly returned, introducing the new candidate.

At the first glimpse I recognized Brigitta Rupert, that haughty girl who had been my early friend and companion at Saint-Aure, but who found it impossible to continue her friendship and favor to a humble milliner's girl. The sight of her occasioned me a surprise by no means of a pleasing nature, and the involuntary start I gave evidently recalled me to her recollection. In a moment her cheeks assumed the paleness of death, and her self-love seemed to suffer the most horrible torments at the light in which our rencontre mutually placed us. As soon as she could command herself sufficiently to speak she cried:

"Ah! madame, do I then appear in your presence?"

"Yes," replied I, "before the poor and humble milliner to whom you so harshly refused your friendship!"

"Fortune has well avenged you, madame," said Brigitta in a melancholy tone; "and as I can easily imagine how unpleasant the sight of me must be, I will hasten to relieve you from it."

These last words touched me and restored me in a degree to my natural good temper.

"Brigitta," said I to her, "after the little affection you have ever manifested for me it would be impossible as well as unwise to take you into my service; but let me know in what way I can best promote the interest of yourself and husband, and I pledge myself to accomplish it for you."

"I thank you, madame," answered she, resuming her accustomed haughtiness; "I came to solicit a situation near the person of the comtesse du Barry. Since that is refused me, I have nothing more to request."

"Be it as you please," replied I. Brigitta made a low courtesy and quitted the room.

Henriette, who had been the witness of this scene, expressed her apprehensions that I should be displeased with her for introducing an unwelcome visitor to me.

"No," cried I; "'tis not with you I am vexed, but my-self."

"And why so, dear madame?"

"Because I reproach myself with having in my own prosperity forgotten one of my earliest and dearest friends who loved me with the tenderest affection. Possibly she may now be in trouble or difficulties from which I might have a thousand ways of relieving her; but it is never too late to do good. To-morrow early you shall set out for Paris; when there, go to the rue Saint-Martin, inquire for the sign of la Bonne Foi; it is kept by a pastry-cook named M. Mathon, of whom I wish you to learn every particular relative to his daughter Geneviève."

My wishes were laws to Henriette, who instantly retired to prepare for her journey. I had not ventured to desire her to glean any information concerning the brother of Geneviève, and yet at the recollection of the handsome Nicolas my heart beat impetuously. With what impatience did I await the return of Henriette! At length she came.

"Well!" said I.

"I have found out M. Mathon," answered Henriette.

"Which, the father?"

"Yes, madame."

"And what is his present occupation?"

"As usual, madame—superintending his kitchen and shop."

"Is he alone in his business?"

"Oh, no! madame; he is assisted by his son, a fine, dark, handsome young man."

"His son, then, lives with him?"

"Yes, madame, and he is married."

"Married! But it is not of this young man I wish to speak, but of his sister, of Geneviève: tell me all about her."

"I only learned, madame, that she had married a tailor named Guérard, who, after being very unsuccessful in business, died suddenly, leaving her wholly destitute, with two young children."

I immediately wrote the following note to my early friend:

"The comtesse du Barry having heard of the misfortunes of madame Guérard, and knowing how much she is deserving of a better fate, is desirous of being useful to her. She therefore requests madame Guérard will call next Monday, at two o'clock, on her at her hôtel, rue de la Pussienne."

Poor Geneviève nearly fainted when she received this note, which was conveyed to her by a footman wearing my livery. She could not imagine to whom she was indebted for procuring her such exalted patronage, and she and her family spent the intervening hours before her appointed interview in a thousand conjectures on the subject. On Monday, punctually at two o'clock, she was at the hôtel dressed in her best, her lovely countenance setting off the humble style of even her holiday garb. She knew me the instant she saw me, and in the frank simplicity of her own heart imagining she could judge of mine, she ran to me and threw herself into my arms, exclaiming:

"Oh, my dear Jeannette, what pleasure does it afford me to meet you again! Oh! I see how it is; you are the friend of the comtesse du Barry, and it is to you I shall owe my future good fortune, as I do this present mark of her favor." "No, my good Geneviève," cried I, weeping for joy; "she who now embraces you is the comtesse du Barry."

After we had a little recovered ourselves I took my friend by the hand and led her to a sofa, where we seated ourselves side by side. Returning to the scenes of our early youth, I related to Geneviève all that had occurred since—my adventures, faults, and favor. When I had concluded my recital Geneviève commenced hers; but it was soon told. There is little to relate in the life of a woman who has passed her days in the virtuous discharge of her duties.

Our mutual confidences being over, and having again exchanged a most affectionate embrace I put into the hands of my companion a portfolio containing thirty thousand livres in bankbills. I promised her likewise to obtain for her some lucrative situation. "Do more than this for me!" cried Geneviève. "Since you will still grant me your friendship, secure for me the happiness of occasionally meeting you. I can with truth declare that of all your proofs of kindness and regard that which I prefer is the pleasure of seeing you."

This ingenuous request touched my heart, and I replied to it by fondly caressing the warm-hearted Geneviève and assuring her that my purse and my house should be ever open to her. We then resumed our interesting reminiscences, and Geneviève was the first to speak of her brother. At the name of Nicolas I felt the blood mount to my very forehead, and an indefinable sensation passed over me at the mention of him who had possessed my virgin love. I strove, however, to conceal from my friend the powerful emotion which agitated me, and I replied with apparent tranquillity that I should be happy to assist her brother with the best of my credit and influence; and I kept my word by obtaining for him, at the solicitation of his sister, some lucrative situation, the exact nature of which I do not now recollect, where they resided together in ease and comfort. I had only to recommend

them to the notice of M. de Boulogne, who felt himself much flattered at being selected by me to make the fortunes of my two friends.

From this time Geneviève visited me as frequently as she could, and her society delighted me, whilst in her conversation I found a frankness and sincerity which I had vainly sought at court. She had loved me when a simple milliner, and she cherished the same fond regard for me in my improved situation. Her friendship has not forsaken me in my reverses, and I feel quite assured that death only will dissolve the tender friendship which still subsists between us. As for her brother, he spared me much shame and confusion by never seeking my presence. A meeting with him would indeed have overwhelmed me with painful recollections.

CHAPTER XXV.

Madame du Barry succeeds in alienating Louis XV. from the duc de Choiseul—Letter from madame de Grammont—Louis XV.—The chancellor and the countess—Louis XV. and the abbé de la Ville—The maréchale de Mirepoix and madame du Barry.

ATTERS now assumed an air of importance.

My struggle with the des Choiseuls had become a deadly war which could only be terminated either by his downfall or my dismissal from court. This latter measure was not very probable. An old man is not easily detached from a woman whom he loves, and each day only added to my ascendancy over the mind of the king. It is true that the same force of habit which enchained Louis XV. to me bound him likewise to M. de Choiseul. The idea of change terrified him, and so great was his dread of fresh faces that he would have preferred dying with his old minister to creating a younger one who might witness his end. Happily the duke himself brought on the crisis of his fate; his power was cramped on all sides, yet, resolved not to lay it down till the last extremity, he sought to stay his failing credit with the rising influence of the dauphiness. His enemies were not slow in pointing out to the king his minister's frequent visits and great assiduities to a foreign princess, and enlarged upon the fatal effects this new alliance might produce to the monarchy.

Meanwhile the chancellor, threatened by the parliaments, saw only one way of averting the storm which was about to burst on his head. This was to introduce into the cabinet persons entirely devoted to himself; but to accomplish his purpose it was necessary to exclude the duc de Choiseul and his party. M. de Maupeou came to me in December, and after gently scolding me for what he termed my carelessness he showed me a letter

from the duchesse de Grammont which, he said, would wonderfully aid our plans. This letter was written to one of the presidents of the parliament of Toulouse, M. de ———. I cannot give you his name, for, although I have preserved the original of the letter, I have mislaid the envelope, on which the address was written. I here give you a copy of this curious and important production:

"Monsieur le Président—I promised to give you the exact details of all that passed in this gay metropolis, and 'tis with much pleasure I sit down to fulfil my engagement. Things go on much as usual, or perhaps I should be speaking more correctly were I to say they are rapidly progressing from bad to worse. We have no longer a king in France; all power is lodged in the hands of one sprung from the most infamous origin, who, in conjunction with others as intriguing as herself, seeks only to ruin the kingdom and to degrade it in the eyes of other nations.

"The noble firmness of sovereign courts is odious to people of this class; thus you may imagine the detestation in which they regard the candid and loyal conduct of the duke. In the hope of procuring the dismissal of my brother they have chosen for his successor a wretch loaded with crimes, a coward, an extortioner, a murderer—the duc d'Aiguillon. As for you gentlemen who now constitute our parliament, your places will soon be filled by a magistracy drawn from the dregs of society: a troop of slaves, deaf and blind, except as he who pays them best will have them exercise those powers.

"This is no time for indolent repose; we must at once courageously and unanimously defeat the guilty schemes of our enemies. So long as my brother retains his present post he will support you with his best interest, but should he be dismissed your business will soon be finished.

"I beg my best remembrances, first, to your excellent lady, and after her to madame B. and madame L., not forgetting the marquise de Chalret, whose wit is truly Attic; nor the marquise de P—s, who conceals beneath the graceful exterior of a Langue-docian the soul of one of Corneille's Roman matrons. For yourself rely upon my warmest friendship and endeavors to serve you. My brother is most anxious to know you after the flattering manner in which I have mentioned you to him. When will you gratify us both by visiting Paris?

Nothing could have arrived more à propos for our purpose than this letter. I was still engaged in its perusal when the king was announced. I wished to hurry it back into the hands of M. de Maupeou, but he, more crafty than I, requested I would keep it.

"It is fitting," said he, "that it should be seen by the right person."

Louis XV., astonished at the strange scene, inquired what it meant.

"A most shameful piece of scandal, sire," replied I.

"An infamous epistle," added the chancellor, "which one of my friends managed to abstract from the post-office and forwarded to me: I brought it to madame la comtesse that she might admire the determined malice of our enemies."

"You excite my curiosity," cried Louis XV. "Madame, have the kindness to allow me to see this paper."

"Indeed, sire," exclaimed I, "I know not whether I ought to obey your majesty, so entirely has the writer of the letter forgotten the respect due to your sacred person."

"Oh," said the king, "do not fear that; I am but too well used to the offence to feel astonishment at its occurrence."

I placed the paper in the hand of Louis XV., whose eye easily recognized the handwriting of madame de Grammont. "Ah! ah!" cried he, "is it so? Let us see what this restless lady has to say of us all." I watched the countenance of the king as he read, and saw the frown that covered it grow darker and darker; nevertheless he continued to read on without comment till he had reached the end; then sitting down and looking full at the chancellor, he exclaimed:

"Well, M. de Maupeou, and what do you think of this business?"

"I am overwhelmed with consternation, sire," replied he, "when I think that one of your majesty's ministers should be able to conspire thus openly against you."

"Stay!" cried Louis, hastily; "that fact is by no means proved. The duchesse de Grammont is a madwoman, who involves the safety of her brother; if I only believed him capable of such treachery he should sleep this night in the Bastille, and to-morrow the necessary proceedings should be commenced against him. As for his sister, I will take care of her within four good walls and avenge myself for her past misconduct by putting it out of her power to injure me further."

"Sire," said I in my turn, "remember she is a woman. I beseech you to pardon her and let the weight of your

just indignation fall upon her brother."

"Chancellor," cried the king, "this business must not

be lightly passed over."

"Nor without due consideration," replied M. de Maupeou. "Your majesty may look upon this letter as the basis of a secret plot. As for the duchess, I am of my cousin's opinion: despise her audacious attempts, but spare not her brother. He alone is the guilty as well as dangerous person."

The king made no answer, but rose, and, crushing the letter in his hand, threw it from him.

"Would," exclaimed he at last, "that the fiends had those who take such delight in disgusting me with my very existence. Heavens! how justly may I say I despise all men! Nor have I a much better opinion of your sex, madame la comtesse, I must warn you."

"Much obliged, sire!" cried I. "Really, I was not prepared for such gallantry. It is rather hard that you should quarrel with me because this disagreeable duchess behaves ill! Upon my word, it is very unpleasant!"

"Come, come," said Louis XV., kissing my cheek, "don't you be a naughty child. If I had not you, where should I turn for consolation amidst the torments by which I am surrounded? Shall I tell you? Amidst all these perplexing affairs there are moments when I fear I may not be promoting the happiness of my people."

"Your majesty is greatly mistaken," replied the chancellor. "The nation in general must esteem itself most happy under your reign; but it will always happen that ill-disposed persons seek to pervert the public opinion and to lead men's minds astray. The duchess when traveling was the faithful and active agent of her brother. The duke, to secure his stay in the ministry, will eagerly avail himself of every adventitious aid. Within your kingdom he seeks the support of the parliaments and philosophers; without, he claims the succor of Germany and Spain. Your majesty is certainly master of your own will, and it will ill become me to point out the path you should tread; but my duty compels me to say that the duc de Choiseul is the greatest enemy of the royal house. Of this he gave me a convincing proof in the case of your august son; and now, if he fancied he should find it more advantageous to have the dauphin for his master-"

"Chancellor of France!" cried Louis, much agitated, "do you know what you are asserting?"

"The truth, sire!" I exclaimed. "The public voice accuses the duc de Choiseul of the death of your son; it declares—"

"How! you, too, madame!" exclaimed the king, looking at me fixedly.

"And why not, sire? I am merely repeating what is in everyone's mouth."

"I have heard this horrible charge before," added the king. "The Jesuits informed me of it, but I could not give credit to such a monstrosity."

"So much the worse," replied I. "In the world in which we live we should always be on our guard."

"Sire," added the chancellor, with the most diabolical address, "I am persuaded that M. de Choiseul is the most honorable man in the world, and that he would shudder at the bare idea of any attempt upon the life of your majesty; but his relatives, friends and creatures believe that, supported by the dauphiness, he would continue in

office under your successor. Who can answer for their honor? Who can assure you that some one among them may not do that for the duke which he would never venture to attempt himself?

"This is the personal danger your majesty runs so long as M. de Choiseul continues in office. Were he dismissed the world would soon abandon the disgraced minister, and the dauphiness be amongst the first to forget him."

The king was pale with agitation, and for some minutes continued traversing the apartment with hasty strides. Then he suddenly stopped.

"You are, then, convinced, M. de Maupeou," cried he, "that the duke is leagued with the parliaments to weaken

my authority?"

"There are palpable proofs to that effect," replied the chancellor. "Your majesty may recollect the skilful manner in which on the 3d of last September he avoided attending you to parliament. Most assuredly had he not been the friend of rebels he would not have shrunk from evincing by his presence how fully he shared your just indignation."

"That is but too true," cried Louis XV.; "and I felt much annoyed at the time that he preferred going to amuse himself at the house of M. de Laborde when his duty summoned him to my side."

"Your majesty cannot fail to perceive how everything condemns him: his personal conduct, equally with that of his sister, proves how little he regards his royal master's interest; and should your clemency resolve upon sparing him now you may find your mercy produce fatal effects to yourself."

"His dismissal," resumed the king, "would disorganize all my political measures. Whom could I put in his place? I know no one capable of filling it."

"Your majesty's wisdom must decide the point," replied the chancellor. "My duty is to lay before you the true state of things. This I have done, and I know

myself well enough not to intrude my counsel further. Nevertheless I cannot help remarking that in your majesty's court there are many as capable as M. de Choiseul of directing affairs—M. d'Aiguillon, for example."

"Ah!" answered Louis XV.; "this is not the moment, when M. d'Aiguillon is smarting from his severe contest with the long robes, to elevate him over the head of my hitherto esteemed minister."

M. de Maupeou and myself perceived that we should best serve my friend's cause by refraining from pressing the matter further, and we therefore changed the conversation. Nevertheless, as what had already passed had taken its full effect upon the king's mind, he suggested an idea which I should never have dreamed of recommending—to consult the abbé de la Ville on the subject.

The abbé de la Ville, head clerk of foreign affairs, was a man who at the advanced period of fourscore preserved all the fire and vivacity of youth; he was acquainted with ministerial affairs even better than M. de Choiseul himself. Having formerly belonged to the Jesuits, to whom he was entirely devoted, he had appeared to accelerate the period of their destruction; never had he been able to pardon his patron the frightful part he had compelled him to enact in the business. Years had not weakened his ancient rancor, and it might be said that he had clung to life with more than natural pertinacity as unwilling to lay it down till he had avenged himself on de Choiseul. Louis XV. wrote to him desiring he would avail himself of the first pretext that occurred to request an audience. This note was forwarded by a footman; the good abbé easily divined that this mystery concealed some great design: he therefore hastened to solicit an audience as desired. When introduced into the cabinet of the king his majesty inquired at once:

"Monsieur l'abbé, can I depend upon your discretion?"
"Sire," replied the abbé with a blunt frankness, "I am
sorry your majesty can doubt it."

"Be satisfied, sir," said the king, "I had no intention to offend you, but I wish to consult you upon a point the importance of which you will fully appreciate. Answer me without disguise. Do you believe that the services of the duc de Choiseul are useful to my kingdom, and that my interests would suffer were I to dismiss him?"

"Sire," replied M. de la Ville, without hesitation, "I protest to you, as a man of honor, that the presence of the duc de Choiseul is by no means essential to the ministry, and that your majesty's interests would sustain not the slightest injury by his absence."

After this the abbé de la Ville entered into particulars unnecessary to repeat here. It is sufficient to say that all he advanced materially aided our wishes. He afterwards reaped the reward of his friendly services, for when the duc d'Aiguillon had displaced the duc de Choiseul he bestowed on M. de la Ville the title of director of foreign affairs, an office created for him, and the bishopric in partibus of Tricomie. The good abbé did not, however, long enjoy his honors, but ended his career in 1774.

This conversation had been repeated to me, and on my side I left no means untried of preventing Louis XV. from placing further confidence in his minister; but, feeble and timid, he knew not on what to determine, contenting himself with treating the duke coolly. He sought by continual rebuffs and denials to his slightest request to compel him to demand that dismissal he had not the courage to give.

Whilst these things were in agitation, madame de Mirepoix, who had been for some days absent from Versailles, came to call upon me. This lady possessed a considerable share of wit, and although on the most intimate terms with me had not altogether broken off with the des Choiseuls, to whom she was further bound on account of the prince de Beauvau, her brother. It therefore excited in me no surprise when I heard that the des Choiseuls had

called on her to ascertain whether it would not be possible through her mediation to come to some terms with me.

"And you must not be angry with me," continued she, "for undertaking the negotiation. I well foresaw all the difficulties and entertained no hopes of its success; but upon second thoughts I considered it better I should accept the mission, for in case of a negative being returned it will be safe in my keeping, and I will not add to the chagrin of a failure the shame of a defeat."

"It is my opinion," replied I, "that all propositions coming from these people should be rejected; they have compelled me to raise between them and myself an immense wall of hatred not less difficult to surmount than the grand wall of China."

"Yet," replied the maréchale, smiling, "they are disposed to pay any price for so doing."

"I have friends," said I, "from whom I can never separate myself."

"They are willing that your friends shall be theirs likewise," cried she, "for they see that M. de Maupeou, the duc de la Vrillière, and the abbé Terray are provided for, and that the duc d'Aiguillon alone remains to be suitably established. M. de Choiseul would be happy to aid him in obtaining the post of minister of naval affairs."

"Well, and the duchesse de Grammont," inquired I, "would she visit me?"

"Oh, as to that, I know nothing about it and can venture no opinion; my commission does not extend so far."

"I understand you," said I; "she seeks for peace only as it would enable her the better to carry on her hostilities against me. I am sorry, madame la maréchale, that I cannot accept your terms for a reconciliation."

"Remember, I pray of you, that I have been an ambassadress and nothing more," said madame de Mirepoix. "Recollect I have spoken to you in the words of others, not my own. I must beg of you to be secret. If you divulge the particulars of this morning's conversation it

246 MEMOIRS OF JEANNE VAUBERNIER

is I who will suffer by it. Your friends will be displeased with me for my interference, and I have no inclination to provoke the anger of a party so powerful as yours."

I promised the maréchale to observe an inviolable secrecy, and so well have I kept my promise that you are the first person to whom I ever breathed one syllable of the affair. I must own that it struck me as strange that the duc de Choiseul should abandon his cousin and consent to take his seat beside the duc d'Aiguillon, whom he detested; perhaps he sought only to deceive us all by gaining time till the death of the king. But what avails speculation upon the words and actions of a courtier whose heart is an abyss too deep for gleam of light to penetrate?

CHAPTER XXVI.

Baron d'Oigny, general postmaster—The king and the countess read the opened letters—The disgrace of de Choiseul resolved upon—Lettre de cachet—Anecdote—Spectre of Philip II., king of Spain—The duc de Choiseul banished—Visits to Chanteloup—The princesses—The dauphin and dauphiness—Candidates for the ministry.

HE interference of madame de Mirepoix, originating as it did in the duc de Choiseul, let me at once into the secret of his fears and the extent of my own power. The knowledge of the weakness of my adversary redoubled my energy, and from this moment I allowed no day to pass without forwarding the great work till I succeeded in effecting the duke's ruin and securing my own triumph. The pamphleteers in the pay of my enemies, and those who merely copied these hirelings, assert that one evening after supper, when Louis was intoxicated with wine and my seductions, I prevailed upon him to sign a lettre de cachet against his minister, which he immediately revoked when the break of day had restored to him his senses. This was a malicious falsehood. You shall hear the exact manner in which the lettres de cachet were signed.

On the evening of the 23d of December, his majesty having engaged to sup with me, I had invited M. de Maupeou, the duc de la Vrillière, and the prince de Soubise. It appears that the king previously to coming had gone to visit the dauphiness; he had not mentioned whither he was going, so that his attendants believed him to be in my apartments, and directed M. d'Oigny, postmaster-general, to seek him there. The baron brought with him a packet of opened letters. When he saw me alone he wished to retire, for the servants, believing him to be one

of the expected guests, had ushered him in. However, I would not permit him to go until the king's arrival, and half sportively, half seriously, I took from him his letters, protesting I would detain them as hostages for his obedience to my desires. At this moment Louis XV. entered the room, and M. d'Oigny, having briefly stated his business, bowed and departed. The baron was a very excellent man, possessing an extensive and intelligent mind. He wrote very pleasing poetry, and had not his attention been occupied by the post he filled he might have made a conspicuous figure in literature.

When we were left to ourselves I said to the king:

"Now, then, for this interesting and amusing budget—for such, I doubt not, it will prove."

"Not so fast, madame, if you please," replied Louis XV.; "perhaps these papers may contain state secrets unfit for your eye."

"Great secrets they must be," said I, laughing, "confided thus to the carelessness of the post." So saying, I broke the seal of the envelope so hastily that many of the letters and notes were scattered over the carpet.

"Well done!" cried the king.

"I entreat your majesty's pardon," said I; "but I will repair the mischief as far as I can."

I stooped to collect the fallen papers and the king had the gallantry to assist me. We soon piled the various letters upon a tray and began eagerly to glance over their contents. My good fortune made me select from the mass those epistles addressed to the members of the country parliaments; they were filled with invectives against me, insulting mention of the king, and praises of the duc de Choiseul. I took especial care to read them in a loud and distinct voice.

"This really is not to be endured!" cried Louis XV.; "that the mistaken zeal of these long-robed gentlemen should make them thus compliment my minister at my expense!"

AND THE CONTRACTOR AND A SECOND

entre de la competition della competition della

"MONSIEUR, I HAVE ENEMIES ENOUGH AT COURT WITHOUT YOU. WON'T YOU TELL ME HOW I CAN WIN YOUR FRIENDSHIP?"

This scene is from David Belasco's play "Du Barry." played at Belasco's Theatre, New York, with Mrs. Leslie Carter as La Du Barry.





"So much the worse for you, sire," replied I, "considering that you continue to prefer your minister to every other consideration."

As I continued searching through the letters I found and read the following phrase:

"Spite of the reports in circulation, I do not believe it possible that M. de Choiseul will be dismissed; he is too necessary to the king, who, without him, would be as incapable as a child of managing his affairs; his majesty must preserve our friend in office in spite of himself."

When I had finished, the king exclaimed in an angry tone: "We shall see how far the prophecy of these sapient gentlemen is correct, and whether their 'friend' is so important to me that I dare not dismiss him. Upon my word, my minister has placed himself so advantageously before his master as to exclude him entirely from the eyes of his subjects."

Whilst these words were speaking M. de Maupeou and M. de la Vrillière were announced. The king, still warm, let fall some words expressive of his displeasure at what had happened. The gauntlet was thrown, and so well did we work upon the irritated mind of Louis XV. that it was determined M. de Choiseul should be dismissed the following day, December 24, 1770. Chanteloup was chosen for the place of his retreat, and M. de la Vrillière, at the dictation of the king, wrote the following letter to the duke:

"Cousin—The dissatisfaction caused me by your conduct compels me to request you will confine yourself to your estate at Chanteloup, whither you will remove in four-and-twenty hours from the date hereof. I should have chosen a more remote spot for your place of exile were it not for the great esteem I entertain for the duchesse de Choiseul, in whose delicate health I feel much interest. Have a care that you do not by your own conduct oblige me to adopt harsher measures; and hereupon I pray God to have you in his keeping.

(Signed) "LOUIS, (and lower) "PHÉLIPPEAUX." When this letter was completed I said to the king:

"Surely, sire, you do not mean to forget the duke's faithful ally, M. de Praslin? It would ill become us to detain him when the head of the family has taken leave of us."

"You are right," replied the king, smiling; "besides, an old broom taken from a masthead would be as useful to us as he would."

Then, turning to M. de la Vrillière, the king dictated the following laconic notice:

"Cousin—I have no further occasion for your services; I exile you to Praslin, and expect you will repair thither within four-and-twenty hours after the receipt of this."

"Short and sweet," cried I.

"Now let us drop the subject," said Louis; "let madame de Choiseul repose in peace to-night, and to-morrow morning, at eleven o'clock, go yourself, M. de la Vrillière, and carry my orders to the duke, and bring back his staff of office."

"To whom will you give it, sire?" inquired the chancellor.

"I have not yet considered the subject," replied the king.

At this instant M. de Soubise was announced. "Motus!" exclaimed the king, as M. de Soubise, little suspecting the nature of our conversation, entered the room. I profited by his coming to slip out of the room into my boudoir, from which I despatched the following note to M. d'Aiguillon:

"My dear Duke—Victoria! We are conquerors. Master and man quit Paris to-morrow. We shall replace them by our friends; and you best know whether you are amongst the number of them."

When I returned to the drawing-room the king exclaimed:

"Come, madame, you are waited for; the prince de Soubise has a very curious anecdote to relate as to what befell a lady of his acquaintance. I begged of him to defer telling it till you rejoined us."

"Are you afraid of ghosts?" inquired the maréchal of me.

"Not this evening," replied I. "To-morrow, perhaps, or the next day I may be."

This jest amused the king and the duc de la Vrillière, whilst M. de Maupeou, who seemed to fear lest I should by any indiscretion reveal our secret, made a signal of impatience, to which I replied by shrugging up my shoulders. Poor M. de Soubise, although he did not comprehend my joke, laughed at it as heartily as the rest who saw its application. "Oh, you courtier!" thought I. We then entreated of him to commence the recital of his tale, which he did in the following words:

"There is in Lower Brittany a family gifted with a most singular endowment: each member of the family, male or female, is warned exactly one month previous to his or her decease of the precise hour and day in which it will take place. A lady belonging to this peculiar family was visiting me rather more than a month since; we were conversing quietly together when all at once she uttered a loud cry, arose from her seat, endeavored to walk across the room, but fell senseless upon the floor. Much grieved and surprised at this scene, I hastily summoned my servants, who bestowed upon the unfortunate lady the utmost attention, but it was long ere she revived. then wished to persuade her to take some rest. 'No,' cried she, rising and giving me orders for her immediate departure, 'I have not sufficient time for rest; scarcely will the short period between me and eternity allow me to set my affairs in order.' Surprised at this language I begged of her to explain herself. 'You are aware,' said she, 'of the fatal power possessed by my family. Well, at the moment in which I was sitting beside you on this

sofa, happening to cast my eyes on the mirror opposite, I saw myself as a corpse wrapped in the habiliments of death, and partly covered with a black and white drapery; beside me was an open coffin. This is sufficient; I have no time to lose. Farewell, my friend, we shall meet no more.' Thunderstruck at these words I suffered the lady to depart without attempting to combat her opinion. This morning I received intelligence from her son that the prophecy had been fulfilled—she is no more."

When the maréchal had finished I exclaimed:

"You have told us a sad, dismal tale; I really fear I shall not be able to close my eyes at all to-night for thinking of it."

"We must think of some means of keeping up your spirits," answered Louis XV. "As for your story, maréchal, it does not surprise me; things equally inexplicable are continually taking place. I read in a letter addressed by Philip V. of Spain to Louis XIV. that the spirit of Philip II., founder of the Escurial, wanders at certain intervals around that building. Philip V. affirms that he himself witnessed the apparition of this spectre."

At this moment supper was announced. "Come, gentlemen," said I, "let us seek to banish these gloomy ideas around our festive board." Upon which the king conducted me to the supper-room, the rest of the company following us. Spite of all my efforts to be gay and induce others to be so likewise, the conversation still lingered upon this dismal subject.

"Heaven grant," exclaimed the chancellor, "that I may not soon have to dread a visit from the ghost of the deceased parliament. However, if such were the case, it would not prevent my sleeping."

"Oh!" cried the king, "these long-robed gentlemen have often more effectually robbed me of sleep than all the spectres in the world could do; yet one night—"

"Well, sire," said I, seeing that Louis was silent, "and what happened to you that night?"

"Nothing that I can repeat," answered Louis XV., glancing around with a mournful look.

A dead silence followed which lasted several minutes, and this evening, which was to usher my day of triumph, passed away in the most inconceivable dulness. What most contributed to render me uneasy was the reflection that at the very moment when we had freed ourselves of our enemies we were ignorant who would fill their vacant places. This was an error, and a great one. My friends would not listen to the nomination of the comte de Broglie, the comte de Maillebois, the duc de la Vauguyon, any more than either M. de Soubise or M. de Castries. The abbé Terray, having upon one occasion proposed the maréchal duc de Richelieu, he very narrowly escaped having his face scratched by M. d'Aiguillon, who cared very little for his dear uncle; but I have unintentionally wandered from the thread of my narrative. I will therefore resume it at once.

I had hoped that the king would this night have retired to his own apartment, and that I should have been enabled to hold a secret council with M. de Maupeou and the ducs de la Vrillière and d'Aiguillon; but no such thing. Imagining, no doubt, that I should be kept awake by my fear of ghosts, his majesty insisted upon remaining with me, and I was compelled to acquiesce. He passed a very agitated night, much more occupied with the des Choiseuls than with me; he could think of nothing, speak of nothing but the sensation which their disgrace would produce. He seemed to dread his family, the nobility, the nation, Europe, and the whole world. I strove to reassure him and to inspire him with fresh courage, and when he quitted me in the morning I felt convinced that he would not again alter his determination.

As soon as Louis XV. had left me comte Jean entered. Although concealed behind the curtain and apparently not on the best terms with me, my brother-in-law nevertheless directed my actions and gave me most excellent

advice. It was not long ere the duc d'Aiguillon arrived. He had seen M. de Maupeou during the night and learned from him the exile of the late minister, but beyond that fact he knew nothing. He inquired of me, with much uneasiness, whether anything had been decided in his behalf. I replied that the king was as yet undecided in his choice of ministers, but that if the duc d'Aiguillon came into office he would in all probability be nominated to the administration of foreign affairs: the direction of the war office had been my noble friend's ardent desire.

Whilst we were thus conversing together, on the 24th of December, 1770, eleven o'clock struck, and we could from the windows perceive M. de la Vrillière taking his way towards that part of the building occupied by M. de Choiseul when at the castle. This latter was in conversation with M. Conzié, bishop of Arras, when the arrival of the duc de la Vrillière bearing the king's commands was signified to him. The prelate, not doubting but the mission related to affairs of importance, took his leave. M. de la Vrillière then presented the lettre de cachet, accompanying it with some remarks of his own upon the talents of the minister and his regret at being selected for so unpleasant an office. "A truce to your feigned regrets, my lord duke," replied the disgraced minister, sarcastically; "I am well assured my dismissal could not have been brought me by hands more ready to discharge the trust than yours." Saying this, M. de Choiseul placed his credentials in the hands of the duke and. slightly bowing, turned his back upon him as if he had forgotten his presence. M. de Choiseul then retired to summon his sister to communicate to her and his wife the misfortune which had befallen him. He then set out for Paris to make the necessary preparations for removing to Chanteloup. There an officer from the king, charged to accompany him to his place of exile, gave him his majesty's orders that he should see no person and receive no visits.

This order did not proceed from me, but was the work of the duc de la Vrillière, who sought by this paltry action to avenge himself upon M. de Choiseul for the reception he had given him. It was wholly useless, however; for in the exile of the duke was seen a thing unheard of, perhaps, before, and in all probability unlikely ever to occur again—the sight of a whole court espousing the part of an exiled minister and openly censuring the monarch who could thus reward his services. You, no doubt, remember equally well as myself the long file of carriages that for two days blocked up the road to Chanteloup. In vain did Louis XV. express his dissatisfaction; his court flocked in crowds to visit M. de Choiseul.

On the other hand, the castle was not in a more tranquil state. At the news of the dismissal and banishment of M. de Choiseul a general hue and cry was raised against me and my friends; one might have supposed, by the clamors it occasioned, that the ex-minister had been the Atlas of the monarchy, and that, deprived of his succor, the state must fall into ruins. The princesses were loud in their anger, and accused me publicly of having conspired against virtue itself! The virtue of such a sister and brother! I ask you, my friend, is not the idea truly ludicrous?

The dauphiness bewailed his fall with many tears; at least, so I was informed by a lady of her suite, madame de Campan. This lady was a most loquacious person. She frequently visited my sister-in-law, and, thanks to her love of talking, we were always well informed of all that was passing in the household of Marie Antoinette. However, the dauphin was far from sharing the grief of his illustrious spouse. When informed of the dismissal of the duke he cried out, "Well, madame du Barry has saved me an infinity of trouble—that of getting rid of so dangerous a man in the event of my ever ascending the throne." The prince did not usually speak of me in the most flattering terms, but I forgave him on the present

occasion, so much was I charmed with his expression relative to the late minister. It afforded me the certainty that I should not have to dread the possibility of his recalling de Choiseul.

Whilst many were bewailing the downfall of the des Choiseuls, others who had an eye more to self-interest presented themselves to share in the spoils of his fortune. There were the princes de Soubise and de Condé, the duc de la Vauguyon, the comtes de Broglie, de Maillebois, and de Castries, the marquis de Monteynard, and many others, equally anxious for a tempting slice of the ministry, and who would have made but one mouthful of the finest and best.

The marquise de l'Hôpital came to solicit my interest for the prince de Soubise, her lover. I replied that his majesty would rather have the maréchal for his friend than his minister; that, in fact, the different appointments had taken place, and that if the names of the parties were not immediately divulged it was to spare the feelings of certain aspirants to the ministry. Madame de l'Hôpital withdrew evidently much disconcerted at my reply. Certainly M. de Soubise must have lost his reason when he supposed that the successor of M. de Choiseul would be himself, the most insignificant prince of France; he only could suppose that he was equal to such an elevation. However this may be, he took upon himself to behave very much like an offended person for some days, but. finding such a line of conduct produced no good he came round again and presented himself as usual at my parties. whilst I received him as if nothing had occurred.

I had more difficulty in freeing myself from the importunities of Messieurs de Broglie and de Maillebois. I had given to each of them a sort of promise: I had allowed them to hope, and yet, when the time came to realize these hopes, I told them that I possessed much less influence than was generally imagined: to which they replied that they knew my power to serve them was much greater

than I appeared to believe. After a while I succeeded in deadening the expectations of M. de Broglie, but it was long ere M. de Maillebois would abandon his pursuit. When every chance of success had left him he gave way to so much violence and bitterness against M. d'Aiguillon that the duke was compelled to punish him for his impudent rage. I will mention the other candidates for the ministry at another opportunity.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The comte de la Marche and the comtesse du Barry—The countess and the prince de Condé—The duc de la Vauguyon and the countess—Provisional minister—Refusal of the secretary-ship of war—Displeasure of the king—The maréchale de Mirepoix—Unpublished letter from Voltaire to madame du Barry—Her reply.

THE comte de la Marche had always evinced the warmest regard for me, and he sought on the present occasion to be repaid for his attachment. Both he and the prince de Condé had their ambitious speculations in the present change of ministers, and both fancied that because their relative, the duke, had governed during the king's minority, the right to the several appointments now vacant belonged as a matter of course to their family. The count had already sent to solicit my interest, through the mediation of madame de Monaco, mistress to the prince de Condé, and, as I very shrewdly suspect, the occasional chère amie of himself. Finding this measure did not produce all the good he expected, he came without further preface to speak to me himself about it. Unwilling to come to an open rupture with him, I endeavored to make him comprehend that the policy of the sovereign would never permit his placing any of the administrative power in the hands of the princes of his family; that he had consented, most reluctantly, to investing them with military command, and that it would be fruitless to urge more.

The comte de la Marche appeared struck by the justness of my arguments. He replied:

"Well, madame, since I cannot be a minister, I must e'en give up my wishes; but, for the love of heaven, entreat of the king to bestow his favors in the shape of a little pecuniary aid. Things look ill at present; they may take a worse turn, but he may confidently rely on my loyalty and devotion. The supreme courts, driven to the last extremity, will make a stand, and princes and peers will range themselves under the banners. We well know how much this resistance will displease his majesty. I pledge myself never to forsake your cause, but to defend it with my life—that is, if my present pressing necessity for money be satisfied. How say you, madame—can you procure it for me?"

"Very probably I may be enabled to assist you," replied I; "but you must first inform me how much will satisfy you."

"Oh," answered he, carelessly, "something less than the mines of Peru will suffice. I am not extravagant, and merely ask for so much as is absolutely necessary. In the first place, sixty thousand livres paid down, and, secondly, a yearly payment of two hundred thousand more."

This demand did not appear to me unreasonable, and I undertook to arrange the matter to the prince's satisfaction, well pleased on my own side to secure so illustrious an ally at so cheap a rate. I procured the assent of the king and the comptroller-general; the sixty thousand livres were bestowed on the comte de la Marche in two separate payments, the pension settled on him, and, still further, an annuity of thirty thousand livres was secured to madame de Monaco; and I must do the count the justice to say that he remained faithful to our cause amidst every danger and difficulty, braving alike insults, opprobrium, and the torrent of pamphlets and epigrams of which he was the object. In fact, we had good reason for congratulating ourselves upon securing such devotion and zeal at so poor a price.

The prince de Condé, surrounded by a greater degree of worldly state and consideration, was equally important to us, although in another way. He had in some degree compromised popularity by attaching himself to me from the commencement of my court favor, and the reception

he bestowed on me at Chantilly had completed his disgrace in the eyes of nobility. He visited at my house upon the most friendly footing, and whenever he found me alone he would turn the conversation upon politics, the state of affairs, and the great desire he felt to undertake the direction of them in concert with me: he would add: "You might play the part of madame de Pompadour, and vet you content yourself with merely attempting to do so: you are satisfied with possessing influence when you might exercise power and command. Your alliance with a prince of the blood would render you sole mistress in this kingdom; and should I ever arrive, through your means, to the rank of prime minister, it would be my pleasure and pride to submit all things to you, and from this accord would spring an authority which nothing could weaken."

I listened in silence, and for once my natural frankness received a check, for I durst not tell him all I knew of the king's sentiments towards him. The fact was, Louis XV. was far from feeling any regard for the prince de Condé, and, not to mince the matter, had unequivocally expressed his contempt for him. He often said to me when speaking of him, "He is a conceited fellow who would fain induce persons to believe him somebody of vast importance." Louis XV. had prejudices from which no power on earth could have weaned him, and the princes of the house of Condé were amongst his strongest antipathies: he knew a score of scandalous anecdotes relating to them which he took no small pleasure in repeating.

However, all the arguments of the prince de Condé were useless and produced him nothing, or at least nothing for himself, although he procured the nomination of another to the ministry, as you will hear in its proper place; but this was not sufficient to allay the cravings of his ambition, and in his rage and disappointment, when open war was proclaimed between the king and his parliament, he ranged himself on the side of the latter. He

soon, however, became weary of his new allies, and, once more abandoning himself to the guidance of interest, he rejoined our party. Well did M. de Maupeou know men when he said they all had their price; and great as may be the rank and title of princes, with plenty of money, they, too, may be had.

But amongst all the candidates for the ministry the one who occasioned me the greatest trouble was the duc de la Vauguyon, who insisted upon it that he had done much for me and complained bitterly of his unrequited services and of my having bestowed my confidence on others. Up to the moment of the disgrace of the des Choiseuls he had been amongst the most bitter of the malcontents, but no sooner were they banished from court than M. de la Vauguyon forgot everything and hastened to me with every mark of the warmest friendship.

"Ah!" exclaimed he, "I have much to scold you for, but I will forgive you all your past misdeeds if you will perform your promise to me."

"My dear father," cried I (for I used jestingly to style him so, in the same manner as I designated the bishop of Orléans gros père), "are you indeed displeased with me? That is very naughty, for you know I love you with all my heart."

"If it be true that you entertain any regard for me, why have you evinced so little towards me? Am I not of the right materials for making ministers? Why, then, have you not procured my appointment to a vacant situation?"

"Stay, stay! my dear father," cried I. "How you run on! To hear you talk, any person would suppose that places and appointments rained down upon me, and that I had only to say to you, my dear duke, choose which you please; then, indeed, you might complain with justice; but you know very well that all these delightful things are in the hands of the king, who alone has a right to bestow them as he judges best, whilst I am wholly powerless in the business."

262

"Say, rather," replied the duke, quickly, "that you find it suits your present purpose to put on this want of power. We all know that your veto is absolute with his majesty, and it requires nothing more to obtain whatsoever you desire."

The duc de la Vauguyon was powerful and represented the whole of a party—that of the religionists, which was still further supported by the princesses; but for this very reason the triumvirate, consisting of messieurs d'Aiguillon, de Maupeou, and the abbé Terray, would not have accepted his services at any price.

The good duke returned several times to the charge, sometimes endeavoring to move me by gentle entreaties and at others holding out threats and menaces; good and bad words flowed from his lips like a mixture of honey and gall, but when he found that both were equally thrown away upon me he retired offended, and by the expression of his rage and disappointment succeeded in incensing both the dauphin and dauphiness against me. May heaven preserve you, my friend, from the anger of a bigot!

I think I have detained you long enough with the relation of the intrigues by which I was surrounded upon the dismissal of the des Choiseuls, and I will now return to the morning of the 24th of December. When the exiles were fairly out of Paris the king found himself not a little embarrassed in the choice of a prime minister. Those who would have suited our purposes did not meet with the king's approbation, and he had not yet sufficient courage to venture upon electing one who should be disagreeable to us; he therefore hit upon a curious provisional election: the abbé Terray, for instance, was placed at the head of the war department. This measure was excused by the assertion that it would require the head of a financier to look into and settle the accounts, which the late minister had no doubt left in a very confused state. Upon the same principle M. Bertin was appointed to the direction of foreign affairs, and M. de Boynes was invested solely with the management of naval affairs. This man, who was counsellor of state and first president of the parliament of Besançon, knew not a letter of the office thus bestowed upon him, but then he was bound body and soul to the chancellor; and it was worth something to have a person who it might be relied on would offer no opposition to the important reforms which were to be set on foot immediately. We required merely automata, and M. de Boynes answered our purpose perfectly well: for a provisional minister nothing could have been better.

The king had at length (in his own opinion) hit upon a very excellent minister of war, and the person selected was the chevalier (afterwards comte) de Muy, formerly usher to the late dauphin. He was a man of the old school, possessing many sterling virtues and qualities. We were in the utmost terror when his majesty communicated to us his election of a minister of war and declared his intention of immediately signifying his pleasure to M. de Muy. Such a blow would have overthrown all our projects. Happily chance befriended us; the modern Cato declared that he should esteem himself most honored to serve his sovereign by every possible endeavor, but that he could never be induced to enter my service upon any pretext whatever. The strangeness of this refusal puzzled Louis XV. not a little. He said to me: "Can you make out the real motive of this silly conduct? I had a better opinion of the man; I thought him possessed of sense, but I see now that he is fit only for the cowl of a monk: he will never be a minister." The king was mistaken. M. de Muy became one under the auspices of his successor.

Immediately that the prince de Condé was informed of what had passed he recommenced his attack, and, finding he could not be minister himself, he determined at least to be principally concerned in the appointment of one; he therefore proposed the marquis de Monteynard, a man of such negative qualities that the best that could be said of

him was that he was as incapable of a bad as of a good action, and for want of a better he was elected. Such were the colleagues given to M. de Maupeou to conduct the war which was about to be declared against the parliaments. I should tell you, en passant, that the discontent of the magistracy had only increased and that the parliament of Paris had even finished by refusing to decide the suits which were referred to them, thus punishing the poor litigants for their quarrel with the minister.

Meanwhile the general interest expressed for the duc

de Choiseul greatly irritated the king.

"Who would have thought," said he to me, "that a disgraced minister could have been so idolized by a whole court? Would you believe that I receive a hundred petitions a day for leave to visit at Chanteloup? This is something new indeed! I cannot understand it."

"Sire," replied I, "that only proves how much danger you incurred by keeping such a man in your employment."

"Why, yes," answered Louis XV.; "it really seems as if, had he chosen some fine morning to propose my abdicating the throne in favor of the dauphin, he would only have needed to utter the suggestion to have it carried into execution. Fortunately for me, my grandson is by no means partial to him, and will most certainly never recall him after my death. The dauphin possesses all the obstinacy of persons of confined understanding: he has but slender judgment and will see with no eyes but his own."

Louis XV. augured ill of his successor's reign, and imagined that the cabinet of Vienna would direct that of Versailles at pleasure. His late majesty was mistaken; Louis XVI. is endowed with many rare virtues, but they are unfortunately clouded over by his timidity and want of self-confidence.

The open and undisguised censure passed by the whole court upon the conduct of Louis XV. was not the only thing which annoyed his majesty, who perpetually tor-

mented himself with conjectures of what the rest of Europe would say and think of his late determinations.

"I will engage," said he, "that I am finely pulled to pieces at Potsdam. My dear brother Frederick is about as sweet-tempered as a bear, and I must not dismiss a minister who is displeasing to me without his passing a hundred comments and sarcastic remarks. Still, as he is absolute as the Medes and Persians, surely he can have no objection to us poor monarchs imitating him and allow me the same privilege in mine. After all, why should I need any person's opinion? Let the world applaud or condemn, I shall act according to my own judgment."

On my side I was far from feeling quite satisfied with the accounts I continued to receive from Chanteloup; above all, I felt irritated at the parade of attachment made by the prince de Beauvau for the exiles, and I complained bitterly of it to the maréchale de Mirepoix.

"What can I do to help it?" she asked. "My sister-inlaw is a simpleton who, having ruined her brother, will certainly cause the downfall of her husband. I beseech you, my dear, out of regard for me, to put up with the unthinking conduct of the prince de Beauvau for a little while; he will soon see his error and amend it." He did indeed return to our party, but his obedience was purchased at a heavy price.

Some days after the disgrace of the duc de Choiseul I received a letter from M. de Voltaire. This writer, who carped at and attacked all subjects, whether sacred or profane, and from whose satires neither great nor small were exempt, had continual need of some powerful friend at court. When his protector, M. de Choiseul, was dismissed he saw clearly enough that the only person on whom he could henceforward depend to aid and support him was she who had been chiefly instrumental in removing his first patron. With these ideas he addressed to me the following letter of condolence, or, to speak more correctly, of congratulation. It was as follows:

"Madame la Comtesse-Fame, with her hundred tongues, has announced to me in my retreat the fall of M. de Choiseul and your triumph. This piece of news has not occasioned me much surprise: I always believed in the potency of beauty to carry all before it; but-shall I confess it?-I scarcely know whether I ought to congratulate myself on the success you have obtained over your enemies. M. de Choiseul was one of my kindest friends, and his all-powerful protection sufficed to sustain me against the malice of my numerous enemies. May a humble creature like me flatter himself with the hope of finding in you the same generous support? For when the god Mars is no longer to be found, what can be more natural than to seek the aid of Pallas, the goddess of the fine arts? Will she refuse to protect with her ægis the most humble of her adorers?

"Permit me, madame, to avail myself of this opportunity to lay at your feet the assurance of my most respectful devotion. I dare not give utterance to all my prayers in your behalf, because I am open to a charge of infidelity from some, yet none shall ever detect me unfaithful in my present professions; at my age 'tis time our choice was made and our affections fixed. Be assured, lovely countess, that I shall ever remain your attached friend, and that no day will pass without my teaching the echoes of the Alps to repeat your much-esteemed name.

"I have the honor to remain, madame, yours, etc., etc."

You may be quite sure, my friend, that I did not allow so singular an epistle to remain long unanswered. plied to it in the following words:

"Sir-The perusal of your agreeable letter made me almost grieve for the disgrace of the duc de Choiseul. Be assured that to his own conduct and that of his family may be alone attributed the misfortune you deplore.

"The regrets you so feelingly express for the calamity which has befallen your late protector do honor to your generous heart, but recollect that your old friends were not the only persons who could appreciate and value your fine talents; to be esteemed worthy the honorable appellation of your patron is a glory which the proudest might envy; and although I cannot boast of being a Minerva, who, after all, was possibly no wiser than the rest of us. I shall always feel proud and happy to serve you with my utmost credit and influence.

"I return you my best thanks for the wishes you express and the attachment you so kindly profess. You honor me too much by repeating my name amidst the bosom of the Alps! Be assured that I shall not be behindhand in making the saloons of Paris and Versailles resound with yours. Had I leisure for the undertaking I would go and teach it to the only mountain worthy of re-echoing it—at the foot of Parnassus.

"I am, sir, yours, etc., etc."

You perceive, my friend, that I intended this reply should be couched in the wittiest style imaginable; yet, upon reading it over at this lapse of time, it appears to me the silliest thing ever penned; nevertheless I flattered myself I had caught the tone and manner in which M. de Voltaire had addressed me: he perceived my intention, and was delighted with the flattering deference it expressed. You know the vanity of men of letters; and M. de Voltaire, as the first writer of the age, possessed in proportion the largest portion of conceit.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A few words respecting Jean Jacques Rousseau—The comtesse du Barry is desirous of his acquaintance—The countess visits Jean Jacques Rousseau—His household furniture—His portrait—Thérèse—A second visit from madame du Barry to Jean Jacques Rousseau—The countess relates her visit to the king—Billet from Jean Jacques Rousseau to madame du Barry—The two duchesses d'Aiguillon.

PITE of the little estimation in which I held men of letters, generally speaking, you must not take it for granted that I entertained an equal indifference for all these gentlemen. I have already, I fear, tired your patience when dwelling upon my ardent admiration for M. de Voltaire. I have now to speak to you of that with which his illustrious rival, Jean Jacques Rousseau, inspired me—the man who, after a life so filled with constant trouble and misfortunes, died a few years since in so deplorable a manner. At the period of which I am now speaking this man, who had filled Europe with his fame, was living at Paris in a state bordering upon indigence. I must here mention that it was owing to my solicitation he had been permitted to return from his exile, I having successfully interceded for him with the chancellor and the attorney-general. M. Seguier made no difficulty to my request, because he looked upon Jean Jacques Rousseau as the greatest enemy to a set of men whom he mortally hated—the philosophers. Neither did M. de Maupeou, from the moment he effected the overthrow of the parliament, see any objection to bestowing his protection upon a man whom the parliaments had exiled. In this manner, therefore, without his being aware of it, Rousseau owed to me the permission to re-enter Paris. Spite of the mortifying terms in which this celebrated writer had spoken of the king's mistresses, I had a lively curiosity to know him. All that his enemies repeated of his uncouthness, and even of his malicious nature, far from weakening the powerful interest with which he inspired me, rather augmented it by strengthening the idea I had previously formed of his having been greatly calumniated. The generous vengeance which he had recently taken for the injuries he had received from Voltaire particularly charmed me. I thought only how I could effect my design of seeing him by one means or another, and in this resolution I was confirmed by an accident which befell me one day.

It was the commencement of April, 1771. I was reading for the fourth time "La Nouvelle Héloïse," and for the tenth, or probably twelfth, the account of the party on the lake, when the maréchale de Mirepoix entered the room. I laid my open volume on the mantelpiece, and the maréchale, glancing her eye upon the book I had just put down, smilingly begged my pardon for disturbing my grave studies, and, taking it in her hand, exclaimed:

"Ah! I see you have been perusing 'La Nouvelle Héloïse.' I have just been having more than an hour's conversation respecting its author."

"What were you saying of him?" asked I.

"Why, my dear, I happened to be at the house of madame de Luxembourg, where I met with the comtesse de Boufflers."

"Yes, I remember," said I, "the former of these ladies was the particular friend of Jean Jacques Rousseau."

"And the second also," answered she; "and I can promise you that neither the one nor the other spoke too well of him."

"Is it possible?" cried I with involuntary warmth.

"The duchess," resumed madame de Mirepoix, "says he is an ill-bred and ungrateful man, and the countess insists upon it he is a downright pedant."

¹ Jean Jacques Rousseau in his journey through Lyons in June, 1770, subscribed for the statue of Voltaire.

"Shameful, indeed!" cried I; "but can you, my dear friend, account for the ill-nature with which these ladies speak of poor Rousseau?"

"Oh! ves." replied the maréchale; "their motives are easily explained, and I will tell you a little secret for the truth of which I can youch. Madame de Luxembourg once conceived the most lively passion for Jean Jacques."

"Indeed!" cried I. "And he-"

"Did not return it. As for madame de Boufflers, the case was exactly reversed, and Rousseau has excited her resentment by daring long to nurse a hopeless flame of which she was the object. This presumption on the part of the poet our dignified countess could never pardon. However, I entreat of you not to repeat this: remember, I tell you in strictest secrecy."

"Oh, be assured of my discretion," said I. "I promise not to publish your secret" (which I was very certain was not communicated for the first time when told to me).

This confidence on the part of the maréchale had in some unaccountable manner only increased the ardent desire I felt to see the author of the "Nouvelle Héloïse." and I observed to madame de Mirepoix that I had a great curiosity to be introduced to Rousseau.

"I fear," said she, "you will never be able to persuade him to visit at the château."

"How, then, can I accomplish my desire of seeing this celebrated man?"

"By one simple method: if he will not come to you, you must go to him. I would willingly accompany you, but he knows me, and my presence would spoil all. The best thing you can do is to dress yourself quite plainly as a lady from the country, taking with you one of your female attendants. You may take as a pretext for your visit some music you would wish to have copied. Be sure to treat M. Rousseau as a mere copyist and appear never to have heard of his superior merit. Do this, and you will receive the best possible reception."

I greatly approved of the maréchale's advice, which I assured her I would delay no longer than till the following day to put into practice, and after some further conversation upon J. J. Rousseau we parted.

Early the next day I set out for Paris, accompanied by Henriette. There, in pursuance of the suggestion of madame de Mirepoix, I dressed myself as a person recently arrived from the country, and Henriette, who was to accompany me, disguised herself as a villager. I assure you our personal attractions lost nothing by the change of our attire. From the rue de la Jussienne to the rue Platrière is only a few steps; nevertheless, in the fear of being recognized I took a hired carriage. Having reached our place of destination, we entered by a shabby door the habitation of Jean Jacques Rousseau. His apartments were on the fifth floor. I can scarcely describe to you, my friend, the emotions I experienced as I drew nearer and nearer to the author of "Héloïse." At each flight of stairs I was compelled to pause to collect my ideas, and my poor heart beat as if I had been keeping an assignation.

At length, however, we reached the fifth story. There, after having rested a few minutes to recover myself, I was about to knock at a door which was opposite to me, when as I approached I heard a sweet but tremulous voice singing a melancholy air which I have never since heard anywhere; the same voice repeated several times the romance to which I was listening. When it had entirely ceased I profited by the silence to tap with my knuckles against the door, but so feeble was the signal that even Henriette, who was close behind me, could not hear it. She begged I would permit her to ring a bell which hung near us, and, having done so, a step was heard approaching the door, and in a minute or two it was opened by a man of about sixty years of age, who, seeing two women, took off his cap with a sort of clumsy gallantry, at which I affected to be much flattered.

"Pray, sir," said I, endeavoring to repress my emotion, "does a person named Rousseau, a copier of music, live here?"

"Yes, madame; I am he. What is your pleasure?"

"I have been told, sir, that you are particularly skilful in copying music cheaply. I should be glad if you would undertake to copy these airs I have brought with me."

"Have the goodness to walk in, madame."

We crossed a small, obscure closet which served as a species of antechamber and entered the sitting-room of M. Rousseau, who seated me in an arm-chair, and, motioning to Henriette to sit down, once more inquired my wishes respecting the music.

"Sir," said I, "as I live in the country and but very rarely visit Paris, I should be obliged to you to get it done as early as possible."

"Willingly, madame; I have not much upon my hands just now."

I then gave to Jean Jacques Rousseau the roll of music I had brought. He begged I would continue seated, requested permission to keep on his cap, and went to a little table to examine the music I had brought.

Upon my first entrance I had perceived a close and confined smell in these miserable apartments, but by degrees I became accustomed to it, and began to examine the chamber in which I sat with as strict a scrutiny as if I had intended making an inventory of its contents. Three old elbow-chairs, some rickety stools, a writing-table on which were two or three volumes of music, some dried plants laid on white-brown paper; beside the table stood an old spinet, and close to the latter article of furniture sat a fat and well-looking cat. Over the chimney hung an old silver watch; the walls of the room were adorned with about half a dozen views of Switzerland and some inferior engravings; two only, which occupied the most honorable situations, struck me: one represented Frederick II., and under the picture were written some lines (which

I cannot now recollect) by Rousseau himself; the other engraving, which hung opposite, was the likeness of a very tall, thin, old man whose dress was nearly concealed by the dirt which had been allowed to accumulate upon it; I could only distinguish that it was ornamented with a broad riband. When I had sufficiently surveyed this chamber, the simplicity of which, so closely bordering on want and misery, pained me to the heart, I directed my attention to the extraordinary man who was the occasion of my visit. He was of middle height, slightly bent by age, with a large and expansive chest; his features were common in their cast, but possessed of the most perfect regularity. His eyes, which he from time to time raised from the music he was considering, were round and sparkling, but small, and the heavy brows which hung over them conveyed an idea of gloom and severity; but his mouth, which was certainly the most beautiful and fascinating in its expression I ever saw, soon removed this unfavorable impression. Altogether there belonged to his countenance a smile of mixed sweetness and sadness which bestowed on it an indescribable charm.

To complete my description, I must not forget to add his dress, which consisted of a dirty cotton cap to which were fixed strings of a riband that had once been scarlet; a pelisse with armholes, a flannel waistcoat, snuff-colored breeches, gray stockings, and shoes slipped down at the heel after the fashion of slippers. Such was the portrait and such the abode of the man who believed himself to be one of the potentates of the earth, and who, in fact, had once owned his little court and train of courtiers; for in the century in which he lived talent had become as arbitrary as sovereign power—thanks to the stupidity of some of our grandees and the caprice of Frederick of Prussia.

Meanwhile my host, undisturbed by my reflections, had quietly gone over his packet of music. He found amongst it an air from "Le Devin du Village," which I had purposely placed there. He half turned towards me and

looked steadfastly at me, as if he would force the truth from my lips.

"Madame," said he, "do you know the author of this

little composition?"

"Yes," replied I, with an air of as great simplicity as I could assume; "it was written by a person of the same name as yourself who writes books and composes operas. Is he any relation to you?"

My answer and question disarmed the suspicions of Jean Jacques, who was about to reply, but stopped himself as if afraid of uttering a falsehood and contented himself with smiling and casting down his eyes. Taking courage from his silence, I ventured to add: "The M. Rousseau who composed this pretty air has written much beautiful music and many very clever works. Should I ever know the happiness of becoming a mother I shall owe to him the proper care and education of my child." Rousseau made no reply, but he turned his eyes towards me, and at this moment the expression of his countenance was perfectly celestial, and I could readily imagine how easily he might have inspired a warmer sentiment than that of admiration.

Whilst we were conversing in this manner a woman between the age of forty and fifty entered the room. She saluted me with great affectation of politeness, and then without speaking to Rousseau went and seated herself familiarly upon a chair on the other side of the table. This was Thérèse, a sort of factotum who served the master of these apartments both as servant and mistress. I could not help regarding this woman with a feeling of disgust; she had a horrible cough, which she told us was more than usually troublesome on that day. I had heard of her avarice; therefore, to prevent the appearance of having called upon an unprofitable errand, I inquired of Jean Jacques Rousseau how much the music would cost.

"Six sous a page, madame," replied he, "is the usual price."

"Shall I, sir," asked I, "leave you any cash in hand for the purchase of what paper you will require?"

"No, I thank you, madame," replied Rousseau, smiling. "Thank God, I am not yet so far reduced that I cannot purchase it for you. I have a trifling annuity—"

"And you would be a much richer man," screamed Thérèse, "if you would insist upon those people at the opera paying you what they owe you." These words were accompanied with a shrug of the shoulders intended to convey a vast idea of her own opinion.

Rousseau made no reply; indeed, he appeared to me like a frightened child in the presence of its nurse, and I could quickly see that from the moment of her entering the room he had become restless and dejected; he fidgeted on his seat and seemed like a person in excessive pain. At length he rose, and, requesting my pardon for absenting himself, he added, "My wife will have the honor to entertain you whilst I am away." With these words he opened a small glass door and disappeared in the neighboring room.

When we were alone with Thérèse she lost no time in opening the conversation.

"Madame," cried she, "I trust you will have the goodness to excuse M. Rousseau. He is very unwell; it is really extremely vexatious."

I replied that M. Rousseau had made his own excuses. Just then Thérèse, wishing to give herself the appearance of great utility, cried out:

"Am I wanted there, M. Rousseau?"

"No, no, no," replied Jean Jacques, in a faint voice which died away as if at a distance.

He soon after re-entered the room.

"Madame," said he, "have the kindness to place your music in other hands to copy. I am truly concerned that I cannot execute your wishes, but I feel too ill to set about it directly."

I replied that I was in no hurry, that I should be in

Paris some time yet, and that he might copy it at his leisure. It was then settled that it should be ready within a week from that time, upon which I rose, and, ceremoniously saluting Thérèse, was conducted to the door by M. Rousseau, whose politeness led him to escort me thither, holding his cap in his hand. I retired, filled with admiration, respect, and pity.

When next I saw the duc d'Aiguillon I could not refrain from relating to him all that had happened. My recital inspired him with the most lively curiosity to see Rousseau, whom he had never met in society. It was then agreed that when I went to fetch my music he should accompany me, disguised in a similar manner to myself, and that I should pass him off as my uncle. At the end of the eight days I repaired early as before to Paris. The duke was not long in joining me there. He was so inimitably well disguised that no person would ever have detected the most elegant nobleman of the court of France beneath the garb of a plain country squire. We set out laughing like simpletons at the easy air with which he wore his new costume; nevertheless our gayety disappeared as we reached the habitation of J. J. Rousseau. Spite of ourselves we were compelled to honor and respect the man of talent and genius who preferred independence of ideas to riches, and before whom rank and power were compelled to lay aside their unmeaning trappings ere they could reach his presence. When we reached the fifth landing-place I rang, and this time the door was opened by Thérèse, who told us M. Rousseau was out.

"But, madame," answered I, "I am here by the direction of your husband to fetch away the music he has been engaged in copying for me."

"Ah, madame!" exclaimed she, "is it you? I did not recollect you again. Pray walk in. M. Rousseau will be sure to be at home for you."

"So, then," thought I, "even genius has its visiting

lists." We entered; Jean Jacques formally saluted us and invited us to be seated. He then gave me my music; I inquired what it came to. He consulted a little memorandum which lay upon the table, and replied, "So many pages, so much paper, eighteen livres twelve sous;" which, of course, I instantly paid. The duc d'Aiguillon, whom I styled my uncle, was endeavoring to lead Rousseau into conversation, when the outer bell rung. Thérèse went to open the door, and a gentleman entered, of mature age, although still preserving his good looks. The duke regarded him in silence and immediately made signs for me to hasten our departure. I obeyed, and took leave of Rousseau with many thanks for his punctuality. He accompanied us as before to the door, and there I quitted him never to see him more. As we were descending the staircase M. d'Aiguillon told me that the person who had so hastened our departure was Duclas, and that his hurry to quit Rousseau arose from his dread of being recognized by him. Though M. Duclas was a very excellent man, I must own I owed him no small grudge for a visit which had thus abridged ours.

In the evening the duc d'Aiguillon and myself related to the king our morning's pilgrimage. I likewise recounted my former visit, which I had concealed until now. Louis XV. seemed greatly interested with the recital of it. He asked me a thousand questions, and would fain hear the most trifling particulars.

"I shall never forget," said Louis XV., "the amazing success obtained by his 'Devin du Village.'" There certainly were some beautiful airs, and the king began to hum over the song of

"J'ai perdu tout mon bonheur."

"Yes, madame," continued his majesty, "I promise you that had Rousseau after his success chosen to step forward as a candidate for public favor he would soon have overthrown Voltaire."

"Pardon, me," replied I, "but I cannot believe that would have been possible under any circumstances."

"And why not?" asked the king. "He was a man of great talent."

"Doubtless, sire, but not of the kind to compete with Voltaire."

The king then changed the conversation to Thérèse, inquiring whether she possessed any attractions.

"None whatever, sire," replied the duke; "at least none that we could perceive."

"In that case," rejoined his majesty, "she must have charmed her master by some of those unseen perfections which take the deepest hold of the heart; besides, I know not why we should think it strange that others see with different eyes to ourselves."

I made no secret with the comte Jean of my visit, and he likewise expressed his desire to know a man so justly celebrated, and in its proper place you may hear how he managed to effect this and what befell him in consequence; but to finish for the present with Rousseau, for I will not promise that I shall not again indulge in speaking of him. I will just say that after the lapse of two or three days from the time of my last visit the idea occurred to me of sending him a thousand crowns in an Indian casket. This I sent by a servant out of livery, whom I strictly enjoined not to name me, but to say simply that he came from a lady. He brought back the casket to me unopened and the following billet from Rousseau:

"Madame—I send back the present you would force upon my acceptance in so concealed a manner. If it be offered as a testimony of your esteem I may possibly accept it when you permit me to know the hand from which it comes. Be assured, madame, that there is much truth in the assertion of its being more easy to give than to receive.

"I have the honor to remain, madame,

"Yours, etc., etc.,

This was rather an uncouth manner of refusing; nevertheless, when at this distance of time I review the transaction I cannot help admitting that I well deserved it. Perhaps when it first occurred I might have felt piqued, but since I have quitted the court I have again read over the works of J. J. Rousseau, and I now speak of him, as you see, without one particle of resentment.

I must now speak to you of a new acquaintance I made about this period-that of the two duchesses d'Aiguillon. From my first entrance into the château until the close of 1770 madame d'Aiguillon, the daughter-in-law, observed a sort of armed neutrality towards me; true, she never visited me, but she always met me with apparent satisfaction at the houses of others; thus she managed to steer clear of one dangerous extreme or the other till the downfall of the des Choiseuls; when, the duc d'Aiguillon having been nominated to the ministry, she perceived that she could not without great ingratitude omit calling to offer me her acknowledgments, and accordingly she came. On my side I left no means untried of rendering myself agreeable to her, and so well did I succeed that from that moment her valuable friendship was bestowed on me with a sincerity which even my unfortunate reverses have been unable to shake; and we are to this day the same firm and true friends we were in the zenith of my power. Not that I would seek to justify the injury she sought to do our queen, but I may and do congratulate myself that the same warmth which pervades her hatreds likewise influences her friendships.

I cannot equally boast of the treatment I received from the duchess dowager d'Aiguillon, who, as well as her daughter-in-law, came to see me upon the promotion of her son. She overloaded me with caresses, and even exceeded her daughter-in-law in protestations of devotion and gratitude. You should have heard her extol my beauty, wit, and sweetness of disposition; she, in fact, so overwhelmed me with her surfeiting praises that at last I

became convinced that, of the thousand flattering things she continually addressed to me, not one was her candid opinion; and I was right, for I soon learned that in her circle of intimates at the houses of the Beauffremons, the Brionnes, and, above all, the marquise du Deffant, she justified her acquaintance with me by saying it was a sacrifice made to the interests of her son, and amused these ladies by censuring my every word and look. The dowager's double-dealing greatly annoyed me; nevertheless, not wishing to vex her son or her daughter-in-law, I affected to be ignorant of her dishonorable conduct. However, I could not long repress my indignation, and one day that she was praising me most extravagantly I exclaimed, "Ah, madame, how kind it would be of you to reserve one of these pretty speeches to repeat at madame du Deffant's." This blow rather surprised her; but, quickly rallying her courage, she tried to persuade me that she always spoke of me in the same terms. "It may be so," replied I, "but I fear that you say so many flattering things to me that you have not one left when out of my sight."

The maréchale de Mirepoix used to say that a caress from madame d'Aiguillon was not less to be dreaded than the bite of M. d'Ayen. Yet the duchess dowager has obtained a first-rate reputation for goodness; everyone styled her the "good duchesse d'Aiguillon." And why, do you suppose? Because she was one of those fat, fresh, portly-looking dames of whom you would have said her very face and figure bespoke the contented goodness of her disposition; for who would ever suspect malice could lurk in so much embonpoint? I think I have already told you that this lady expired, whilst bathing, of an attack of apoplexy in the month of June, 1772.

Adieu, my friend. If you are not already terrified at the multiplicity of the letters which compose my journal I have yet much to say, and I flatter myself the continuance of my adventures will be found no less interesting than those you have perused.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The king's friends—The duc de Fronsac—The duc d'Ayen's remark—Manner of living at court—The marquis de Dreux—Brézé—Education of Louis XV.

WAS now firmly fixed at court. The king, more than ever devoted to me, seemed unable to dispense with my constant presence. I had so successfully studied his habits and peculiarities that my empire over him was established on a basis too firm to be shaken, whilst my power and unbounded influence convinced my enemies that so long as the present monarch sat upon the throne of France their attempts at diminishing my credit and influence would only recoil upon themselves. Louis XV. usually supped in my apartments every evening, unless, indeed, by way of change, I went to sup with him. Our guests were, of course, of the first order, but yet not of the most exemplary morals. These persons had tact, and saw that to please the king they must not surpass him, so that if by chance he should reflect on himself he would appear to advantage amongst them. Poor courtiers! It was labor in vain. The king was in too much fear of knowing himself to understand that study: he knew the penetration and severity of his own judgment, and on no account would he exercise it at his own expense.

The duc de Duras, although a man of little wit, was yet gay and always lively. He amused me. I liked his buoyant disposition and forgave him, although he had ranged himself with the protesting peers. In fact, I could not be angry with him. The folly of opposition had seized on him only because it was epidemic. The dear duke had found himself with wolves and had begun to howl with them. I am sure that he was astonished at himself

when he remembered the signature which he had given and the love he had testified for the old parliament, for which, in fact, he cared no more than Jean de Vert. God knows how he compensated for this little folly at the château. It was by redoubling his assiduities to the king and by incessant attentions to me. In general, those who wished to thrive at court only sought how to make their courage remembered; M. de Duras was employed only in making his forgotten.

The prince de Terigny, the comte d'Escars, the duc de Fleury were not the least amusing. They kept up a lively strain of conversation, and the king laughed outrageously. But the vilest of the party was the duc de Fronsac. Ye gods! what a wretch! To speak ill of him is no sin. A mangled likeness of his father, he had all his faults with not one of his merits.

The saints of Versailles—the duc de la Vauguyon, the duc d'Estissac, and M. de Durfort-did like others. These persons practised religion in the face of the world and abstained from loose conversation in presence of their own families, but with the king they laid aside their religion and reserve, so that these hypocrites had in the city all the honors of devotion and in the royal apartments all the advantages of loose conduct. As for me, I was at Versailles the same as everywhere else. To please the king I had only to be myself. I relied for the future on my uniformity of conduct. What charmed him in the evening would delight again the next day. He had an equilibrium of pleasure, a balance of amusement which can hardly be described; it was every day the same variety: the same journeys, the same fêtes, the balls, the theatres. all came round at fixed periods with the most monotonous regularity. In fact, the people knew exactly when to laugh and when to look grave.

There was in the château a most singular character, the grand master of the ceremonies of France. His greatgrandfather, his grandfather, his father, who had fulfilled these functions for a century, had transmitted to him their understanding and their duties. All he thought of was how to regulate the motions and steps of every person at court. He adored the dauphin and dauphiness, because they both diverted and fatigued themselves according to the rules in such cases made and provided. He was always preaching to me, and quoted against me the precedents of Diane de Poitiers or Gabrielle d'Estrées. One day he told me that all the misfortunes of mademoiselle de la Vallière occurred in consequence of her neglect of etiquette. He would have had all matters pass at court during the old age of Louis XV. as at the period of the childhood of Louis XIV.

CHAPTER XXX.

Fête given by the comtesse de Valentinois—The comtesse du Barry feigns an indisposition—Her dress—The duc de Cossé—The comte and comtesse de Provence—Dramatic entertainment—Favart and Voisenon—A few observations—A pension—The maréchale de Luxembourg—Adventure of M. de Bombelles—Copy of a letter addressed to him—Louis XV.—M. de Maupeou and madame du Barry.

WISH to relate to you what befell me at a fête given me by madame de Valentinois while she feigned to give it in the honor of madame de Provence.

The comtesse de Valentinois, flattered by the kindness of the dauphiness's manner towards her, and wishing still further to insinuate herself into her favor, imagined she should promote her object by requesting that princess would do her the honor to pass an evening at her house. Her request was granted, and that too before the duchesse de la Vauguyon could interfere to prevent it. Furious at not having been apprised of the invitation till too late to cause its rejection, she vowed to make the triumphant countess pay dearly for her triumph. For my own part I troubled myself very little with the success of madame de Valentinois, which in fact I perceived would rather assist than interfere with my projects. Hitherto I had not made my appearance at any of the houses of the nobility when the princesses were invited thither. This clearly proved to the public in general how great was the opposition I experienced from the court party. I was now delighted to prove to the Parisians that I was not always to lead the life of a recluse, but that I could freely present myself at those parties to which other ladies were invited. However, as my friends apprehended that the comtesse de Provence might prevail upon her lady of honor not to invite me, by the advice of the chancellor and the minister for foreign affairs it was arranged that I should for a week previous to the fête feign a severe indisposition. It would be impossible to describe the joy with which these false tidings were received by my enemies. We are all apt to picture things as we would have them, and already the eager imaginations of the opposing party had converted the account of my illness into an incurable and mortal disease. Every hour my friends brought me in fresh anecdotes of the avidity with which the rumor of my dangerous state had been received, whilst I lay upon what the credulous hopes of my enemies had determined to be my deathbed, laughing heartily at their folly and preparing fresh schemes to confound and disappoint their anticipated triumph.

One very important object of consideration was my dress for the coming occasion. The king presented me with a new set of jewels, and himself selected the materials for my robe and train, which were to be composed of a rich green satin embroidered with gold, trimmed with wreaths of roses and looped up with pearls; the lower part of this magnificent dress was trimmed with a profusion of the finest Flemish lace. I wore on my head a garland of full blown roses, composed of the finest green and gold work; round my forehead was a string of beautiful pearls, from the centre of which depended a diamond star; add to this a pair of splendid ear-rings, valued at one hundred thousand crowns, with a variety of jewels equally costly, and you may form some idea of my appearance on that eventful evening. The king, who presided at my toilette, could not repress his admiration. He even insisted upon clasping my necklace in order that he might, as he said, flatter himself with having completed such a triumph of nature and art.

At the hour fixed upon I set out, conducted by the ducs d'Aiguillon and de Cossé; and now I remember I have introduced this latter to you for the first time. However, I will promise that it will not be for the last. He pos-

sessed, and still possesses, all the virtues of his noble house. He was impetuous from a deeply feeling heart, and proud from a consciousness of being properly appreciated. Young, handsome, and daring, he was pre-eminently calculated both to inspire love and to feel it. It was quite impossible for him to fail in winning the affections of any woman he exerted himself to please, and even at the present time that he has lost some of his earlier graces he is still irresistible as ever; his naturally gay disposition was but ill suited to nourishing grave or philosophic reasoning, but then he was the soul of company, and possessed a fine and delicate wit which ever vented itself in the most brilliant sallies. M. de Cossé, like the knights of old, was wholly devoted to his king and his mistress, and would, I am sure, had occasion required it, have nobly died in defence of either. I only pray he may never be put to the proof. I saw much of him at the beginning of our acquaintance, but as his many amiable qualities became better known I found myself almost continually in his society; indeed, as I have something to confess in the business, I could hardly choose a better opportunity than the present did I not recollect that the good duc d'Aiguillon is waiting all this while for me to announce the entrée of our party into the anteroom of madame de Valentinois.

My entrance was a complete coup-de-théâtre. I had been imagined languishing on the bed of sickness, yet there I stood in all the fulness of health and freshness of beauty. I could very easily read upon each countenance the vexation and rage my appearance of entire freedom from all ailment excited. However, I proceeded without any delay to the mistress of the house, whom I found busily engaged in seating her visitors and playing the amiable to the dauphiness. This princess seemed equally astonished at my unexpected apparition. Nevertheless, taken off her guard, she could not prevent herself from courteously returning the profound salutation I made her.

As for the duchesse de la Vauguyon, when she saw me she turned alternately from red to white, and was even weak enough to give public vent to her fury. The comte de Provence, who had been told that I was not expected, began to laugh when he perceived me, and, taking the first opportunity of approaching me, he said: "Ah, madame! so you, too, can mystify your friends, I see! Have a care; the sight of charms like yours is sufficient to strike terror into any adversaries, without having recourse to any expedient to heighten their effect." Saying this he passed on without giving me the opportunity of replying as I could have wished to do.

The maréchale de Mirepoix, to whom I had confided my secret, and of whose fidelity I was assured, was present at the fête. I availed myself of the offer of a seat near her, and directly we were seated, "You are a clever creature," said she, "for you have completely bewildered all the female part of this evening's society, and by way of a finishing stroke will run away with the hearts of all the flutterers here before the fair ladies they were previously hovering around have recovered their first astonishment."

"Upon my word," said I, smiling, "I do not wonder at the kind looks with which the ladies favor me if my presence is capable of producing so much mischief."

"Pray, my dear," answered the maréchale, "be under no mistake; you might be as much beloved as others are if you did not monopolize the king's affections. The consequence is that every woman with even a passable face looks upon you as the usurper of her right; and as the fickle gentlemen who woo these gentle ladies are all ready to transfer their homage to you directly you appear, you must admit that your presence is calculated to produce no inconsiderable degree of confusion."

The commencement of a play which formed part of the evening's entertainment obliged us to cease further conversation.

288

The first piece represented was "Rose et Colas," a charming pastoral, to which the music of Monsigny gave a fresh charm. The actors were selected from among the best of the Comédie Italienne-the divine Clairval and the fascinating mademoiselle Caroline. I was completely enchanted whilst the play lasted. I forgot both my cabals and recent triumph, and for a while believed myself actually transported to the rural scenes it represented, surrounded by the honest villagers so well depicted; but this delightful vision soon passed away, and soon, too soon, I awoke from it to find myself surrounded by my excellent friends at court.

"Rose et Colas" was followed by a species of comedy mixed with songs. This piece was wholly in honor of the dauphiness, with the exception of some flattering and gallant allusions to myself and some gross compliments to my cousin the chancellor, who, in new silk robe and a fine powdered wig, was also present at this fête.

The performers in this little piece, who were Favart, the actor, and Voisenon, the priest, must have been fully satisfied with the reception they obtained, for the comedy was applauded as if it had been one of the chefs d'œuvre of Voltaire. In general a private audience is very indulgent so long as the representation lasts, but no sooner has the curtain fallen than they indulge in a greater severity of criticism than a public audience would do. And so it happened on the evening in question. One couplet had particularly excited the discontent of the spectators, male and female. I know not what prophetic spirit inspired the lines.

The unfortunate couplet was productive of much offence against the husband and the lover of madame Favart, for the greater part of the persons present perfectly detested my poor cousin, who was "to clip the wings of chicanery." Favart managed to escape just in time, and the abbé de Voisenon, who was already not in very high favor with his judges, was compelled to endure the full weight of their complaints and reproaches; every voice was against him, and even his brethren of the French Academy, departing from their accustomed indulgence upon such matters, openly reprimanded him for the grossness of his flattery; the poor abbé attempted to justify himself by protesting that he knew nothing of the hateful couplet, and that Favart alone was the guilty person upon whom they should expend their anger.

"I am always," cried he, "doomed to suffer for others' offences. Every kind of folly is made a present to me."

"Have a care, monsieur l'abbé!" exclaimed d'Alembert, who was among the guests; "have a care! Men seldom lavish their gifts but upon those who are rich enough to return the original present in a tenfold degree." This somewhat sarcastic remark was most favorably received by all who heard it; it quickly circulated through the room, while the poor, oppressed abbé protested with vehement action.

The fête itself was most splendidly and tastefully conducted, and might have sent the different visitors home pleased and gratified in an eminent degree had not spite and ill-nature suggested to madame de la Vauguyon that as the chancellor and myself were present it must necessarily have been given with a view of complimenting us rather than madame de Provence. She even sought to irritate the dauphiness by insinuating the same mean and contemptible observations, and so far did she succeed that when madame de Valentinois approached to express her hopes that the entertainment which she had honored with her presence had been to her royal highness's satisfaction the dauphiness coolly replied: "Do not, madame, affect to style this evening's fête one bestowed in honor of myself or any part of my family; 'tis true we have been the ostensible causes, and have by our presence given it all the effect you desired, but you will pardon our omitting to thank you for an attention which was in reality directed to the comtesse du Barry and M. de Maupeou."

Madame de Valentinois came to me with tears in her eyes to repeat the cruel remark of the princess; the maréchale de Mirepoix, who heard her, sought to console her by assurances that it would in no degree affect her interest at court. "Never mind, my good friend," said she; "the pretty bird merely warbles the notes it learns from its keeper, la Vauguyon, and will as quickly forget as learn them. Nevertheless, the king owes you a recompense for the vexation it has occasioned you."

Immediately that I found myself alone with the maréchale I inquired of her what was the nature of the reparation she considered madame de Valentinois entitled to expect from the hands of his majesty. She replied: "'Tis on your account alone that the poor countess has received her late mortification; the king is therefore bound to atone for it in the form of a pension. Money, my dear, money is a sovereign cure at court; it calms every grief and heals every wound."

I fully agreed with the good-natured maréchale, and when I bade the sorrowful madame de Valentinois good night I assured her I would implore his majesty to repair the mischief my presence had caused. Accordingly, on the following day, when the king questioned me as to how far I had been amused with the fête given by madame de Valentinois, I availed myself of the opening to state my entire satisfaction as well as to relate the disgrace into which she had fallen, and to pray his majesty to bestow upon her a pension of fifteen thousand livres.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Louis XV., hastily traversing the chamber, "this fête seems likely to prove a costly one to me."

"Nay, sire," said I, "it was a most delightful evening; and you will not, I hope, refuse me such a trifle for those who lavished so much for my amusement."

"Well," cried he, "be it so; the countess shall have the sum she requires, but upon condition that she does not apply to me again." "Really," replied I, "your majesty talks as if this trifling pension were to be drawn from your own purse."

The king began to smile at my remark, like a man who knows himself found out. I knew him well enough to be certain that, had he intended the pension awarded madame de Valentinois to come from his own privy purse he would scarcely have consented to bestowing on her more than a shabby pittance of a thousand livres per annum. It is scarcely possible to conceive an idea of the excessive economy of this prince. I remember that upon some great occasion when it was requisite to support the public treasury, which was failing, by a timely contribution, the duc de Choiseul offered the loan of two hundred fifty thousand livres, whilst the king, to the astonishment of all who heard him, confined his aid to two thousand louis! The maréchale de Mirepoix used to assert that Louis XV. was the only prince of his line who ever knew the value of a crown. She had, nevertheless, managed to receive plenty from him, although I must own that she had had no small difficulty in obtaining them; nor did the king part with his beloved gold without many a sigh of regret.

At the house of madame de Valentinois I met the maréchale de Luxembourg, who had recently returned from Chanteloup. There really was something of infatuation in the general mania which seemed to prevail of treating the king's sentiments with indifference and considering his displeasure as an affair of no consequence. Before the disgrace of the Choiseuls they were equally the objects of madame de Luxembourg's most bitter hatred; nor was madame de Grammont backward in returning her animosity. Yet, strange as it may seem, no sooner was the Choiseul party exiled than the maréchale never rested till she saw her name engraved on the famous pillar erected to perpetuate the remembrance of all those who had visited the exiles. She employed their mutual friends to effect a reconciliation, which was at length effected by

letter, and a friendly embrace exchanged by proxy. These preliminaries over, the maréchale came to the king to make the request to which he had now become accustomed, but which did not the less amuse him. Of course, Louis XV. made no hesitation in granting her the request she solicited. Speaking to me of the subject, he said: "The tender meeting of madame de Grammont and the maréchale de Luxembourg must indeed be an overpowering sight; I only trust these two ladies may not drop the mask too soon, and bite each other's ear while they are embracing."

Madame de Luxembourg, daughter of the duc de Villeroi, had been first married to the duc de Boufflers, whose brows she helped to adorn with other ornaments than the ducal coronet; nor whilst her youth and beauty lasted was she less generous to her second husband: she was generally considered a most fascinating woman, from the loveliness of her person and the vivacity of her manners; but behind an ever-ready wit lurked the most implacable malice and hatred against all who crossed her path or purpose. As she advanced in life she became more guarded and circumspect, until at last she set herself up as the arbitress of high life, and the youthful part of the nobility crowded around her to hear the lessons of her past experience. By the number and by the power of her pupils she could command both the court and city; her censures were dreaded, because pronounced in language so strong and severe as to fill those who incurred them with no hope of ever shining in public opinion whilst so formidable a veto was uttered against them; and her decrees, from which there was no appeal, either stamped a man with dishonor or introduced him as a first-rate candidate for universal admiration and esteem, and her hatred was as much dreaded as ever her smiles had been courted. my own part I always felt afraid of her, and never willingly found myself in her presence.

After I had obtained for madame de Valentinois the

boon I solicited I was conversing with the king respecting madame de Luxembourg, when the chancellor entered the room. He came to relate to his majesty an affair which had occasioned various reports and much The vicomte de Bombelles, an officer in a hussar regiment, had married a mademoiselle Camp. Reasons unnecessary for me to seek to discover induced him all at once to annul his marriage, and, profiting by a regulation which forbade all good Catholics from intermarrying with those of the reformed religion, he demanded the dissolution of his union with mademoiselle Camp. This attempt on his part to violate upon such grounds the sanctity of the nuptial vow, whilst it was calculated to rekindle the spirit of religious persecution. was productive of very unfavorable consequences to the character of M. de Bombelles. The great cry was against him; he stood alone and unsupported in the contest, for even the greatest bigots themselves would not intermeddle or appear to applaud a matter which attacked both honor and good feeling. The comrades of M. de Bombelles refused to associate with him; but the finishing stroke came from his old companions at the military school where he had been brought up. On the 27th of November, 1771, the council of this establishment wrote him the following letter:

"The military school has perused with equal indignation and grief the memorials which have appeared respecting you in the public prints. Had you not been educated in this establishment, we should merely have looked upon your affair with mademoiselle Camp as a scene too distressing for humanity, and it would have been buried in our peaceful walls beneath the veil of modesty and silence; but we owe it to the youth sent to us by his majesty, for the inculcation of those principles which become the soldier as the man, not to pass over the present opportunity of inspiring them with a just horror of your misguided conduct, as well as feeling it an imperative duty to ourselves not to appear indifferent to the scandal and disgraceful confusion your proceedings have occasioned in the capital. We leave to the ministers of our religion, and the magistrates who are appointed to

guard our laws, to decide upon the legality of the bonds between yourself and mademoiselle Camp; but by one tribunal you are distinctly pronounced guilty towards her, and that is the tribunal of honor, before that tribunal which exists in the heart of every good man. You have been universally cited and condemned. There are some errors which all the impetuosity of youth is unable to excuse, and yours are unhappily of that sort. The different persons composing this establishment, therefore, concur not only in praying of us to signify their sentiments, but likewise to apprise you that you are unanimously forbidden to appear within these walls again."

The chancellor brought to the king a copy of this severe letter, to which I listened with much emotion; nor did the king seem more calm than myself.

"This is, indeed," said he at length, "a very sad affair; we shall have all the quarrels of Protestantism renewed, as if I had not had already enough of those of the Jansenists and Jesuits. As far as I can judge, M. de Bombelles is entitled to the relief he seeks, and every marriage contracted with a Protestant is null and void by the laws of France."

"Oh, sire," cried I, "would I had married a Protestant."

The king smiled for a moment at my jest, then resumed:

"I blame the military school."

"Is it your majesty's pleasure," inquired the chancellor, "that I should signify your displeasure to them?"

"No, sir," replied Louis. "It does not come within your line of duty, and devolves rather upon the minister of war, and very possibly he would object to executing such a commission; for how could I step forward as the protector of one who would shake off the moral obligation of an oath directly it suits his inclinations to doubt its legality? This affair gives me great uneasiness, and involves the most serious consequences. You will see that I shall be overwhelmed with petitions and pamphlets demanding of me the revocation of the edict of Nantes."

"And what, sire," asked the chancellor, gravely, "could

you do that would better consolidate the glory of your reign?"

"Chancellor," exclaimed Louis XV., stepping back with unfeigned astonishment, "have you lost your senses? What would the clergy say or do? The very thought makes me shudder. Do you, then, believe, M. de Maupeou, that the race of the Clements, the Ravaillacs, the Damiens are extinct in France?"

"Ah, sire, what needless fears!"

"Not so needless as you may deem them," answered the king. "I have been caught once. I am not going to expose myself to danger a second time. You know the proverb—no, no; let us leave things as my predecessors left them; besides, I shall not be sorry to leave a little employment for my successor; he may get through it how he can, and spite of all the clamoring of the philosophers the Protestants shall hold their present privileges so long as I live. I will have neither civil nor religious war, but live in peace and eat my supper with a good appetite with you, my fair countess, for my constant guest, and you, M. de Maupeou, for this evening's visitor."

The conversation here terminated.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Madame du Barry purchases the services of Marin the gazetteer—Louis XV. and madame de Rumas—M. de Rumas and the comtesse du Barry—An intrigue—Dénouement—A present upon the occasion—The duc de Richelieu in disgrace—One hundred thousand livres.

HIS Marin, a provençal by birth, in his childhood one of the choristers and afterwards organist of the village church, was, at the period of which I am speaking, one of the most useful men pos-Nominated by M. de Saint-Florentin to the post of censor royal, this friend to the philosophers was remarkable for the peculiar talent with which he would alternately applaud and condemn the writings of these gentlemen. Affixing his sanction to two lines in a tragedy by Dorat had cost him twenty-four hours' meditation within the walls of the Bastille, and for permitting the representation of some opera (the name of which I forget) he had been deprived of a pension of two thousand francs; but, wedded to the delights of his snug post, Marin always contrived, after every storm, to find his way back to its safe harbor. He had registered a vow never to resign the office of censor, but to keep it in spite of danger and difficulty. I soon discovered that he passed from the patronage of Lebel to that of Chamilly. and I was not slow in conjecturing that he joined to his avocations of censor and gazetteer that of purveyor to his majesty's petits amours.

Despite my indefatigable endeavors to render Louis XV. happy and satisfied with the pleasures of his own home, he would take occasional wandering fits and go upon the ramble, sometimes in pursuit of a high-born dame, at others eager to obtain a poor and simple grisette; and so long that the object of his fancy were but

new to him, it mattered little what were her claims to youth, beauty, or rank in life. The maréchale de Mirepoix frequently said to me: "Do you know, my dear creature, that your royal admirer is but a very fickle swain who is playing the gay gallant when he ought to be quietly seated at his own fireside? Have a care. He is growing old, and his intellect becomes more feeble each day; and what he would never have granted some few years back may be easily wrung from him now. Chamilly aspires at governing his master, and Marin seconds him in his project."

At length, roused to a sense of impending evil by the constant reminding of the maréchale, I summoned Marin to my presence. "Now, sir," said I, as he approached, "I would have you to know that I am apprised of all your tricks; you and your friend Chamilly are engaged in a very clever scheme to improve your own fortunes at the expense of the king, your master."

Marin burst into loud protestations of his innocence, declaring that he was as innocent as the lamb just born. I refused to believe this, and desired he would explain to me why he went so frequently to the apartments of M. Chamilly.

"Alas! madame," replied Marin, "I go thither but to solicit his aid in craving the bounty of his majesty."

"You are forever pleading poverty, miserly being!" cried I. "You are far richer than I, but since you want money I will supply you with it, and in return you shall be my secret newsman and royal censor in my service. Now understand me clearly; every month that you faithfully bring me an account of certain goings on I will count into your hand five-and-twenty louis d'or."

I must confess that Marin accepted my proposition only with much reluctance, but still he did accept it, and withdrew, meditating, no doubt, how he should be enabled to satisfy both Chamilly and myself.

A long time elapsed before Marin brought me any news

of importance, and I began to feel considerable doubts of his fidelity, when he came to communicate a very important piece of intelligence. He had just learned that Chamilly frequently went to Paris the bearer of letters from the king to a young and pretty woman named madame de Rumas, who resided in the old rue du Temple.

Here was a pretty discovery: the king actually engaged in a love affair, letters passing between him and his mistress, whilst the head valet de chambre was acting the part of Mercury to the lovers. This indeed required some speedy remedy, and I lost no time in summoning my privy counsellor, comte Jean, whom I acquainted with what had occurred and begged his advice as to the best measures to be pursued. "Indeed," replied my brother-in-law, "what others would do in our place would be to throw M. Chamilly from one of the windows of the château and treat this his friend Marin with a lodging in the Bastille; but as we are persons of temper and moderation, we will go more gently to work. I will in the first place gain every information relative to the affair, that I may satisfy myself Marin is not seeking to show his honest claims to your gold by imposing a forged tale upon your credulity: when that is ascertained we will decide upon our next best step."

Comte Jean departed to seek the assistance of M. de Sartines, who was at that time entirely devoted to my interests, and after diligently searching the whole rue du Temple he succeeded in discovering madame de Rumas. He learned that this lady had recently married a person of her own rank, to whom she professed to be violently attached; that they lived together with great tranquillity, and had the reputation of conducting themselves as persons of extreme propriety and regularity; paid their debts, and avoided, by their air of neatness, order, and modest reserve, the scandal of even their most ill-natured neighbors. The husband was said to be a great religionist, which increased the suspicions of comte Jean. With re-

gard to the epistolary correspondence carried on by the lady no information could be gleaned in that quarter.

Marin was again sent for by my brother-in-law, who questioned and cross-questioned with so much address that Marin found it impossible to conceal any longer the remaining part of the affair, of which he had before communicated but so much as his policy deemed advisable. He confessed that he had originally mentioned madame de Rumas (whom he himself had long known) to Chamilly, had shown him several of her letters, and, as he expected, the style of these epistles so pleased the head valet that he expressed a wish to see the fair writer. Marin accordingly introduced him to the rue du Temple, where he was most graciously received, and returned home enchanted with the lady. He spoke of her to the king, strongly recommending his majesty to judge for himself. Accordingly his majesty wrote to madame de Rumas. who received the letter from the hands of her friend Chamilly with all pomp and state, talked first of her own virtue and honor, and afterwards of her dutiful respect for his majesty. She replied to the royal note in so prudent yet obliging a manner that the king was enchanted. This effective billet was answered by a second letter from the king, which obtained a reply even more tenderly charming than the one which preceded it. An interview was next solicited and granted, for a visit was such a trifle to refuse. The royal guest became pressing and the lady more reserved, till the time was lost in attempts at convincing each other. At the next interview madame de Rumas freely confessed her sincere attachment for his majesty, but added that such was her desire to possess his whole and undivided regard she could never give herself up to the hope of keeping the king's heart. In a few words then she demanded my dismissal. This was going too far, and Louis XV., who thought it no scandal to have a hundred mistresses, was alarmed at the thoughts of occasioning the bustle and confusion attendant upon disgracing his acknowledged favorite and recognized mistress; he therefore assured her that her request was beyond his power to grant.

Madame de Rumas now sought to compromise the affair by talking of a share in his favor. She asked, she said, but the heart of her beloved monarch, and would freely leave me in possession of all power and influence. The king, whose heart was regularly promised once a day, did not hesitate to assure her of his fidelity, and his wily enslaver flattered herself that with time and clever management she should succeed in inducing him to break off those ties which he now refused to sever.

Things were in this state when Marin divulged to us the intrigue conducted by Chamilly and directed, though in a covert manner, by the maréchal duc de Richelieu. This spiteful old man possessed no share of the talent of his family, and, not contented with the favor bestowed on his nephew, thought only of his personal credit and influence, which he fancied he should best secure by introducing a new mistress to the king. This well-concocted scheme threw both comte Jean and myself into a perfect fury. We dismissed Marin with a present of fifty louis, and my brother-in-law besought of me to grant him four-and-twenty hours' undisturbed reflection, whilst on my side I assured him I should not rest until we had completely discomfited our enemies.

On the following day comte Jean laid before me several projects which were far from pleasing in my eyes; too much time was required in their execution. I knew the king too well to be blind to the danger of allowing this mere whim of the moment to take root in his mind. One idea caught my fancy, and without mentioning it to comte Jean I determined upon carrying it into execution.

The maréchale de Mirepoix happened at this moment not to be at Paris at her hôtel in the rue Bergère, but at her country house, situated at the Port à l'Anglaise. I signified to the king my intention of passing a couple of days with the maréchale, and accordingly set out for that purpose. Upon my arrival at Paris I merely changed horses and proceeded onward with all possible despatch to rejoin the maréchale, who was quite taken by surprise at my unexpected arrival. After many mutual embraces and exchange of civilities I explained to her the whole affair which had brought me from Versailles. The goodnatured maréchale could not believe her ears. She soon, however, comprehended the nature of my alarms, and, so far from seeking to dissipate them, urged me to lose no time in crushing an affair which grew more threatening from each day's delay. I was fully of her opinion, and asked only her assistance and co-operation in my plan of writing to M. de Rumas and inviting him to come on the following day to the house of madame de Mirepoix.

That lady would doubtless have preferred my asking her to assist me in any other way, but still she could not refuse to serve me in the manner described, for I either bestowed on her all she desired or caused others to gratify her slightest request; and how could she be sure that, were my reign to end, she might derive the same advantages from any new favorite? Self-interest, therefore, bound her to my service, and accordingly she wrote to M. de Rumas a very pressing letter requesting to see him on the following day upon matters of the highest importance. This letter sent off, I dined with the maréchale and then returned to sleep at Paris.

On the following day at an early hour I repaired to the Port à l'Anglaise. M. de Rumas arrived there a few minutes after myself. He had the air and look of an honest man, but perhaps no species of deceit is more easily detected than that quiet, subdued manner, compressed lips, and uplifted eye. Nowadays such a mode of dissembling would be too flimsy to impose even on children, and hypocrites are ever greater proficients in their art than was even M. de Rumas.

Madame de Mirepoix left us alone together in order

that I might converse more freely with him. I knew not how to begin, but made many attempts to convey, in an indirect manner, the reasons for his being summoned to that day's conference. However, hints and insinuations were alike thrown away upon one who had determined to use neither eyes nor ears but as interest pointed out the reasonableness of so doing, and accordingly, unable longer to repress my impatience, I exclaimed abruptly:

"Pray, sir, do you know who I am?"

"Yes, madame," replied he, with a profound bow and look of the deepest humility; "you are the comtesse du Barry."

"Well, sir," added I, "and you are equally well aware, no doubt, of the relation in which I stand to the king?"

"But, madame-"

"Nay, sir, answer without hesitation; I wish you to be candid, otherwise my exceeding frankness may displease you."

"I know, madame," replied the hypocrite, "that his majesty finds great pleasure in your charming society."

"And yet, sir," answered I, "his majesty experiences equal delight in the company of your wife. How answer you that, M. de Rumas?"

"My wife, madame!"

"Yes, sir, in the company of madame de Rumas. He pays her many private visits, secretly corresponds with her—"

"The confidence of his majesty must ever honor his subjects."

"But," replied I, quickly, "may dishonor a husband."
"How, madame? What is it you would insinuate?"

"That your wife would fain supplant me, and that she is now the mistress of the king, although compelled to be such in secret."

"Impossible!" exclaimed M. de Rumas; "and some enemy of my wife has thus aspersed her to you."

"And do you treat it as a mere calumny?" said I. "No,

sir, nothing can be more true; and if you would wish further confirmation behold the letter which madame de Rumas wrote to the king only the day before yesterday. Take it and read it."

"Heaven preserve me, madame!" exclaimed the timeserving wretch, "from presuming to cast my eyes over what is meant only for his majesty's gracious perusal. It would be an act of treason I am not capable of committing."

"Then, sir," returned I, "I may reasonably conclude that it is with your sanction and concurrence that your wife intrigues with the king?"

"Ah, madame," answered the wily de Rumas in a soft and expostulating tone, "trouble not, I pray you, the repose of my family. I know too well the virtue of madame de Rumas, her delicacy, and the severity of her principles. I know too well likewise the sentiments in which her excellent parents educated her, and I defy the blackest malice to injure her in my estimation."

"Wonderful, sir!" cried I. "So you determine to believe your wife's virtue incorruptible all the while you are profiting by her intrigues? However, I am too certain of what I assert to look on with the culpable indifference you are pleased to assume, whilst your 'virtuous' wife is seeking to supplant me at the château. You shall hear of me before long. Adieu, sir."

So saying, I quitted the room in search of the maréchale, to whom I related what had passed.

"And now what think you of so base a hypocrite?" asked I when I had finished my account.

"He well deserves having the mask torn from his face," replied she; "but give yourself no further concern; return home, and depend upon it that, one way or other, I will force him into the path of honor."

I accordingly ordered my carriage and returned to Versailles, where on the same evening I received the following letter from the maréchale:

"My dear Countess-My efforts have been attended with no better success than yours. Well may the proverb say, 'There is none so deaf as he who will not hear,' and M. de Rumas perseveres in treating all I advanced respecting his wife as calumnious falsehoods. According to his version of the tale, madame de Rumas has no other motive in seeing Louis XV, so frequently but to implore his aid in favor of the poor in her neighborhood. I really lost all patience when I heard him attempting to veil his infamous conduct under the mask of charity; I therefore proceeded at once to menaces, telling him that you had so many advantages over his wife you scorned to consider her your rival, but that nevertheless you did not choose that any upstart pretender should dare ask to share his majesty's heart. To all this he made no reply, and as the sight of him only increased my indignation I at length desired him to quit me. I trust you will pardon me for having spoken in as queen-like a manner as you could have done yourself.

"Adieu, my sweet friend."

This letter was far from satisfying me, and I determined upon striking a decisive blow. I sent for Chamilly, and, treating him with all the contempt he deserved, I told him that if the king did not immediately give up this woman he, Chamilly, might look for his immediate dismissal. At first he sought to appease my anger by eager protestations of innocence, but when he found I already knew the whole affair and was firmly fixed in my determination he became alarmed, threw himself at my knees, and promised to do all I would have him. We then agreed to tell Louis XV. some tale of madame de Rumas that should effectually deter him from thinking further of her.

In pursuance with this resolution Chamilly informed the king that he had just been told that madame de Rumas had a lover who boasted of being able to turn his majesty which way he pleased through the intervention of his mistress. Louis XV. wrote off instantly to M. de Sartines to have a watchful eye over the proceedings of the Rumas family. The lieutenant of police, who had some regard for me, and a still greater portion of fear.

was faithful to my interests, and rendered to Louis XV. the most horrible particulars of the profligate mode of life pursued by madame de Rumas, assuring him that from every consideration of personal safety his majesty should shun the acquaintance. The king, incensed at the trick put upon him by these seemingly virtuous people, was at first for confining both husband and wife in prison, but this measure I opposed with all my power; for, satisfied with the victory I had gained, I cared for no further hurt to my adversaries. I contrived to insinuate to the worthy pair the propriety of their avoiding the impending storm by a timely retreat into the country, a hint they were wise enough to follow, so that I was entirely freed from all further dread of their machinations.

All those who had served me in this affair I liberally rewarded. Marin received for his share five hundred louis. It is true he lost the confidence of Chamilly, but he gained mine instead, so that it will easily be believed he was no sufferer by the exchange. I caused the maréchale to receive from the king a superb Turkey carpet, to which I added a complete service of Sèvres porcelain, with a beautiful breakfast set on which were landscapes most delicately and skilfully drawn in blue and gold. I gave her also two large blue porcelain cots, as finely executed as those you have so frequently admired in my small saloon. These trifles cost me no less a sum than twenty-eight hundred livres. I did not forget my good friend M. de Sartines, who received a cane headed with gold, around which was a small band of diamonds. As for Chamilly, I granted him his pardon, and I think you will admit that was being sufficiently generous.

After thus recompensing the zeal of my friends I had leisure to think of taking vengeance upon the duc de Richelieu for the part he had acted. He came of his own accord to throw himself into the very heat of my anger. He had been calling on the maréchale de Mirepoix, where he had seen with envious eyes the magnificent carpet I

had presented her with. The cupidity of the duke induced him, after continually recurring to the subject, to say that where my friends were concerned no one could accuse me of want of liberality. "No, sir," answered I, "I consider that no price can sufficiently repay the kind and faithful services of a true friend, nor can baseness and treachery be too generally exposed and punished." From the tone in which I spoke the old maréchal easily perceived to what I was alluding. He was wise enough to be silent, whilst I followed up this first burst of my indignation by adding:

"For instance, monsieur le duc, how can I sufficiently repay your friendly zeal to supply the king with a new mistress?"

"I, madame?"

"Yes, sir, you. I am aware of all your kind offices, and only lament my inability to reward them in a suitable manner."

"In that case I shall not attempt to deny my share in the business."

"You have, then, sufficient honor to avow your enmity towards me?"

"By no means enmity, madame. I merely admit my desire to contribute to the amusement of the king, and, surely, when I see all around anxious to promote the gratification of their sovereign I need not be withheld from following so loyal an example. The duc de Duras was willing to present his own relative for his majesty's acceptance, the abbé Terray offers his own daughter, comte Jean his sister-in-law, whilst I simply threw an humble and modest woman in his majesty's path. I cannot see in what my fault exceeds that of the gentlemen I have just mentioned."

"You really are the most audacious of men," replied I, laughing. "I shall be obliged to solicit a lettre de cachet to hold you a prisoner in Guienne. Truly, your nephew and I have a valuable and trustworthy friend in you."

"Hark ye, madame," rejoined the maréchal; "I know not, in the first place, whether his majesty would very easily grant you this lettre de cachet, which most certainly I do not deserve. You have served my nephew and neglected me. I wished to try the strength of my poor wings, and I find, like many others, that I must not hope to soar to any height."

While we were thus talking the maréchale de Mirepoix was announced. I was still much agitated, and she immediately turned towards the duke, as if to inquire of him the cause of my distress; upon which M. de Richelieu related all that had passed with a cool exactitude that enraged me still further. When he had finished I said:

"Well, madame la maréchale, and what is your opinion of all this?"

"Upon my word, my dear countess," answered madame de Mirepoix, "you have ample cause for complaint, but still this poor duke is not so culpable as you imagine him to be. He has large expenses to provide for, and to obtain the money requisite for them he is compelled to look to his majesty, whose favor he desires to win by administering to his pleasures."

"Alas!" replied the duke, "can you believe that but for the pressure of unavoidable circumstances I would have separated myself from my nephew and my fair friend there?"

"Come, come!" cried the maréchale; "I must restore peace and harmony between you. As for you, my lord duke, be a true and loyal subject; and you, my sweet countess, use your best endeavors to prevail on the king to befriend and assist his faithful servant."

I allowed myself to be managed like a child, and instead of scratching the face of M. de Richelieu I obtained for him a grant of one hundred thousand livres, which the court banker duly counted out to him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A prefatory remark—Madame Brillant—The maréchale de Luxembourg's cat—Despair of the maréchale—The ambassador Beaumarchais and the duc de Chaulnes—The comte d'Aranda— Louis XV. and his relics—The abbé de Beauvais—His sermons—He is appointed bishop.

HEN I related to comte Jean my reconciliation with the duc de Richelieu and the sum which this treaty had cost me my brotherin-law flew into the most violent fury; he styled the maréchal a plunderer of the public treasury. Well may the scripture tell us we see the mote in our neighbor's eve, but regard not the beam which is in our own eye. I was compelled to impose silence on comte Jean, or in the height of his rage he would have offered some insult to the old maréchal, who already most heartily disliked him for the familiarity of his tone and manner towards him. I did all in my power to keep these two enemies from coming in each other's way, counselled to that by the maréchale de Mirepoix, whose line of politics was of the most pacific nature; besides, I had no inclination for a war carried on in my immediate vicinity, and for my own part, so far from wishing to harm anyone, I quickly forgave every affront offered to myself.

But hold! I perceive I am running on quite smoothly in my own praise. Indeed, my friend, it is well I have taken that office upon myself, for I fear no one else would undertake it. The most atrocious calumnies have been invented against me; I have been vilified both in prose and in verse, and amongst the large number of persons on whom I have conferred the greatest obligations none has been found with sufficient courage or gratitude to stand forward and undertake my defence. I do not even except madame de Mirepoix, whose conduct towards me in

former days was marked by the most studied attention. She came to me one evening with a face of grief.

"Mercy upon me!" cried I, "what ails you?"

"Alas!" replied she in a piteous tone, "I have just quitted a most afflicted family; their loss is heavy and irreparable. The maréchale de Luxembourg is wellnigh distracted with grief."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed I, "can the duchesse de Lauzun be dead?"

"Alas! no."

"Perhaps poor madame de Boufflers?"

"No, my friend."

"Who, then, is the object of so much regret? Speak: tell me."

"Madame Brillant."

"A friend of the old maréchale's?"

"More than a friend," replied madame de Mirepoix; "her faithful companion; her only companion; her only beloved object since her lovers and admirers ceased to offer their homage—in a word, her cat."

"Bless me!" cried I, "how you frightened me! But what sort of cat could this have been to cause so many tears?"

"Is it possible that you do not know madame Brillant, at least by name?"

"I assure you," said I, "this is the very first time I ever heard her name."

"Well, if it be so, I will be careful not to repeat such a thing to madame de Luxembourg. She would never pardon you for it. Listen, my dear countess," continued madame de Mirepoix; "under the present circumstances it will be sufficient for you to write your name in her visiting-book."

I burst into a fit of laughter.

"It is no joke, I promise you!" exclaimed the maréchale; "the death of madame Brillant is a positive calamity to madame de Luxembourg. Letters of condolence will arrive from Chanteloup; madame du Deffant will be in deep affliction, and the virtues and amiable qualities of the deceased cat will long furnish subjects of conversation."

"It was, then, a singularly engaging animal, I presume?"

"On the contrary, one of the most stupid, disagreeable, and dirty creatures of its kind; but still it was the cat of madame de Luxembourg."

And after this funeral oration the maréchale and myself burst into a violent fit of laughter.

When the king joined us I acquainted him with this death and my conversation with the maréchale. Louis XV. listened to my recital with an air of gravity. When I had finished he said:

"The present opportunity is admirably adapted for satisfying the request of one of my retinue, one of the best-hearted creatures, and at the same time one of the silliest men in the kingdom."

"I beg your pardon, sire," cried I, "but what is his name? For the description is so general that I fear lest I should be at a loss to recollect of whom you are speaking."

"You are very ill-natured," replied Louis XV., "and I hardly know whether you deserve to be gratified by hearing the name of the poor gentleman. However, I will tell it to you: he is called Corbin de la Chevrollerie. A few days since this simple young man, having solicited an audience, informed me that he was desirous of marrying a rich heiress, but that the young lady's family were resolved she should marry no one who was not previously employed as an ambassador. I expressed my surprise at so strange a caprice, but the poor fellow endeavored to vindicate his bride's relatives by stating that they were willing to consider him as my ambassador if I would only commission him to carry some message of compliment or condolence. Accordingly I promised to employ him upon

the occasion of the first death or marriage which should take place in a ducal family. Now I think I cannot do better than make him the bearer of my inquiries after the maréchale de Luxembourg."

This idea struck me as highly amusing, and I immediately despatched a servant to summon M. de la Chevrollerie to the presence of the king. This being done, that gentleman presented himself with all the dignity and importance of one who felt that a mission of high moment was about to be intrusted to him.

His majesty charged him to depart immediately to the house of madame de Luxembourg and to convey his royal master's sincere condolences for the heavy loss she had sustained in madame Brillant.

M. Corbin de la Chevrollerie departed with much pride and self-complacency upon his embassy. He returned in about half an hour.

"Sire," cried he, "I have fulfilled your royal pleasure to madame de Luxembourg. She desires me to thank you most humbly for your gracious condescension: she is in violent distress for the severe loss she has experienced, and begged my excuse for quitting me suddenly, as she had to superintend the stuffing of the deceased."

"The stuffing!" exclaimed the king. "Surely you mean the embalming!"

"No, sire," replied the ambassador, gravely, "the stuffing."

"Monsieur de la Chevrollerie," cried I, bursting into a violent fit of laughter, "do you know in what degree of relationship the deceased madame Brillant stood to madame de Luxembourg?"

"No, madame," answered de la Chevrollerie; "but I believe she was her aunt, for I heard one of the women-in-waiting say that this poor madame Brillant was very old and that she had lived with her mistress during the last fourteen years."

Thus finished this little jest. However, Louis XV.,

who was extremely kind to all about him, especially those in his service, shortly after recompensated his simpleminded ambassador by intrusting him with a commission at once profitable and honorable.

Another event which took place at this period caused no less noise than the death of madame Brillant. At this time mademoiselle Mesnard was, for her many charms of mind and person, the general rage throughout Paris. Courtiers, lawyers, bankers, and citizens crowded alike to offer their homage. Frail as fair, mademoiselle Mesnard received all kindly, and took with gracious smiles the rich gifts showered upon her by her various adorers. first noblemen of the court, knights of the different orders, farmers-general, all aspired to the honor of ruining themselves for her. She had already satisfied the ruinous propensities of at least a dozen of lovers when the duc de Chaulnes entered the lists, and was fortunate enough to eclipse all his rivals. He might long have enjoyed the preference thus obtained but for an act of the greatest imprudence of which a lover could be guilty. He was so indiscreet as to invite several of his most intimate friends to sup with himself and mademoiselle Mesnard. Amongst the number was Caron de Beaumarchais, a man possessed of the grace of a prince and the generous profusion of a highwayman. Caron de Beaumarchais attracted the fancy of the fickle mademoiselle Mesnard, an understanding was very soon established between them, and in a snug little cottage surrounded by beautiful grounds in the environs of Père la Chaise the enamored lovers frequently met to exchange their soft vows.

Happily the deity who presided over the honor of the duke was carefully watching their proceedings. This guardian angel was no other than madame Duverger, his former mistress, who, unable to bear the desertion of her noble admirer, had vowed, in the first burst of rage and disappointment, to have revenge sooner or later upon

her triumphant rival. With this view she spied out all the proceedings of mademoiselle Mesnard, whose stolen interviews and infidelity she was not long in detecting. She even contrived to win over a femme de chambre, by whose co-operation she was enabled to obtain possession of several letters containing irrefragable proofs of guilt, and these she immediately forwarded to the duc de Chaulnes.

This proud and haughty nobleman might have pardoned his mistress had she quitted him for a peer of the realm and his equal, but to be supplanted by a mere man of business—an author, too!—the disgrace was too horrible for endurance. The enraged lover flew to Beaumarchais and reproached him bitterly with his treachery. The latter sought to deny the charge, but the duke, losing all self-possession, threw the letters in his face, calling him a base liar. At this insult Beaumarchais, who, whatever his enemies may say of him, was certainly not deficient in courage, demanded instant satisfaction. The duke by way of answer seized the man of letters by the collar: Beaumarchais called his servants, who in their turn summoned the guard, which speedily arrived, accompanied by the commissary, and with much difficulty they succeeded in removing M. de Chaulnes (who appeared to have entirely lost his reason) from the room.

The conduct of the duke appeared to us completely out of place, and he would certainly have answered for it within the walls of the Bastille had not his family made great intercession for him. On the other hand, Beaumarchais, who eagerly availed himself of every opportunity of writing memorials, composed one on the subject of his quarrel with M. de Chaulnes, complaining that a great nobleman had dared to force himself into his house and lay violent hands on him as if he were a thief or a felon. The whole of the pamphlet which related to this affair was admirably written and, like "The Barber of Seville," marked by a strongly sarcastic vein. However,

the thing failed, and the duc de la Vrillière, the sworn enemy of men of wit and talent, caused Beaumarchais to be immediately confined within fort l'Evêque. So that the offended party was made to suffer the penalty of the offence.

In the same year the comte de Fuentes, ambassador from Spain to the court of Louis XV., took leave of us. He was replaced by the comte d'Aranda, who was in a manner in disgrace with his royal master; this nobleman arrived preceded by a highly flattering reputation. In the first place, he had just completed the destruction of the Jesuits, and this was entitling him to no small thanks and praises from encyclopædists. Everyone knows those two lines of Voltaire's:

"Aranda dans l'Espagne instruisant les fidèles, A l'inquisition vient de rogner les ailes."

The simplicity of comte d'Aranda indemnified us in some degree for the haughty superciliousness of his predecessor. Although no longer young, he still preserved all the tone and vigor of his mind, and only the habit which appeared to have been born with him of reflecting gave him a slow and measured tone in speaking. His reserved and embarrassed manners were but ill-calculated to show the man as he really was, and it required all the advantages of intimacy to see him in his true value. You may attach so much more credit to what I say of this individual as I can only add that he was by no means one of my best friends.

When Louis XV. heard of the nomination of the comte d'Aranda to the embassy from Spain to France he said:

"The king of Spain gets rid of his Choiseul by sending him to me."

"Then why not follow so excellent an example, sire," replied I, "and since your Choiseul is weary of Chanteloup, why not command him upon some political errand to the court of Madrid?"

"Heaven preserve me from such a thing!" exclaimed Louis XV. "Such a man as he ought never to quit the kingdom, and I have been guilty of considerable oversight to leave him the liberty of so doing. But to return to comte d'Aranda. He has some merit, I understand; still, I like not that class of persons around me. They are inexorable censors, who condemn alike every action of my life."

However, not the king's greatest enemy could have found fault with his manner of passing his leisure hours. A great part of each day was occupied in a mysterious manufacture of cases for relics, and one of his valets de chambre, named Turpigny, was intrusted with the commission of purchasing old shrines and reliquaries; he caused the sacred bones, or whatever else they contained, to be taken out by Grandelatz, one of his almoners, readjusted, and then returned to new cases. These reliquaries were distributed by him to his daughters or any ladies of the court of great acknowledged piety. When I heard of this I mentioned it to the king, who wished at first to conceal the fact, but as he was no adept at false-hood or disguise he was compelled to admit it.

"I trust, sire," said I, "that you will bestow one of your prettiest and best-arranged reliquaries on me."

"No, no!" returned he, hastily; "that cannot be."

"And why not?" asked I.

"Because," answered he, "'twould be sinful. Ask anything else in my power to bestow and it shall be yours."

This was no hypocrisy on the part of Louis XV., who, in spite of his somewhat irregular mode of life, professed to hold religion in the highest honor and esteem; to all that it prescribed he paid the submission of a child. We had ample proofs of this in the sermons preached at Versailles by the abbé de Beauvais, afterwards bishop of Senetz.

This ecclesiastic, filled with an inconsiderate zeal, feared not openly to attack the king in his public dis-

courses; he even went so far as to interfere with many things of which he was not a competent judge, and which by no means belonged to his jurisdiction; in fact, there were ample grounds for sending the abbé to the Bastille. The court openly expressed its dissatisfaction at this audacity, and for my own part I could not avoid evincing the lively chagrin it caused me. Yet, would you believe it, Louis XV. declared, in a tone from which there was no appeal, that this abbé had merely done his duty, and that those who had been less scrupulous in the performance of theirs would do well to be silent on the subject. This was not all. The cardinal de la Roche Aymon, his grand almoner, refused to sanction the nomination of M. de Beauvais to the bishopric under the pretext of his not being nobly descended.

M. de Beyons, bishop of Carcassone, a prelate of irreproachable character, was deeply distressed to find that the want of birth would exclude M. de Beauvais from the dignities of his holy profession. He went to discuss the matter with the grand almoner, who again advanced his favorite plea for excluding M. de Beauvais. "My lord," replied M. de Beyons, "if I believed that nobility of descent were the chief requisite for our advancement in our blessed calling, I would trample my crosier under foot and renounce forever all church dignities."

M. de Beyons sought the king and loudly complained to him of the infatuation and obstinacy of M. de la Roche Aymon. Louis XV., however, commanded that M. de Beauvais should be appointed to the first vacant see, and when the grand almoner repeated his objections to the preferment the king answered: "Monsieur le cardinal, in the days of our blessed Saviour the apostles had no need to present their genealogical tree, duly witnessed and attested. It is my pleasure to make M. de Beauvais a bishop. Let that end the discussion of the matter."

The command was too peremptory to admit of any course but instant and entire submission.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

M. D—n and madame de Blessac—Anecdote—The rendezvous and the ball—The wife of Gaubert—They wish to give her to the king—Intrigues—Their results—Letter from the duc de la Vrillière to the countess—Reply—Reconciliation.

MONGST the pages of the chapel was one whom the king distinguished so greatly that he raised him to the rank of a gentleman of the bedchamber and confided to his charge the cabinet of medals, for which he had imbibed a taste since his liaison with madame de Pompadour. This esteemed page was named M. D—n, who united to the most amiable wit a varied and deep knowledge of men and things. He had had adventures at an age when they are usually just understood, and talked of them with the utmost discretion. But this, so far from doing him any injury in the eyes of the world, only served to make him the more admired; for women in general have an inclination for those who do not respect their reputation.

At the period I allude to a madame de Blessac, a very well-looking woman, took upon herself to be very kindly disposed towards the gentleman-in-waiting. She told him so, and thereupon M. D—n ranged himself under her banner and swore eternal constancy. However, the lady by some accident became greatly smitten with the prince de la Trimouille, and, without quitting the little keeper of medals, gave him a lord for a substitute. M. D—n soon learnt this fact that he was not the sole possessor of a heart which formed all his joy and glory. He found he was deceived, and he swore to be revenged.

Now, the prince de la Trimouille had for his mistress mademoiselle Lubert, an opera-dancer, very pretty and extraordinarily silly. M. D—n went to her. "Made-

moiselle," said he, "I come to offer my services to you in the same way that M. de la Trimouille has offered his to madame de Blessac, with whom I was on exceedingly intimate terms."

The services of young D—n were accepted, and he was happy. He then wrote to his former mistress, saying that, anxious to give her a proof of his sincere attachment, he had visited mademoiselle Lubert, that he might leave her leisure for the visits of de la Trimouille.

Madame de Blessac, stung to the quick, quarrelled with the prince, who was excessively enraged with his rival; and there certainly would have been an affair between these two gentlemen had not the king preserved the peace by sending his gentleman to St. Petersburg as attaché to the embassy. M. D——n went to Russia, therefore, and on his return came to see me, and is now one of the most welcome and agreeable of the men of my private circle.

As to madame de Blessac, she continued to carry on the war in grand style. Her husband dying, she married a foolish count (Ramoski), three parts ruined, who speedily dissipated the other quarter of his own fortune and the whole of his wife's. Madame then attacked the rich men of the day one after another. One alone stood out against her: it was M. de la Garde, who had been one of my admirers. Then madame wrote to him; but he did not answer. At length she determined on visiting him, and wrote him a note to say that she should call upon him about six o'clock in the evening. What did M. de la Garde? Why, he gave a ball on that very evening, and when madame Ramoski reached his hôtel she found it illuminated. As she had come quite unprepared she was compelled to return as she came, very discontentedly.

But to leave madame de Blessac and M. D—n and to talk of my own matters. We had at this period a very great alarm at the château, caused by the crime of a man who preferred rather to assassinate his wife than to allow her to dishonor him. It is worthy of narration.

A petty shopkeeper of Paris named Gaubert, who lived in the rue de la Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, had recently married a woman much younger than himself. From the Petit Pont to the rue Mouffetard madame Gaubert was talked of for her lovely face and beautiful figure; she was the Venus of the quarter. Everybody paid court to her, but she listened to none of her own rank, for her vanity suggested that she deserved suitors of a loftier rank.

Her husband was very jealous. Unfortunately M. Gaubert had for cousin one of the valets of the king; this man. who knew the taste of his master, thought how he could best turn his pretty cousin to account. He spoke to her of the generosity of Louis XV., of the grandeur of Versailles, and of the part which her beauty entitled her to play there. In fact, he so managed to turn the head of this young woman that she begged him to obtain for her a place in the king's favor. Consequently Girard (that was his name) went to madame de Laugeac and told her the affair as it was. She, pleased with an opportunity of injuring me, went to Paris and betook herself incognito to the shop of madame Gaubert. She found her charming, and spoke of her to the duc de la Vrillière, and both agreed to show her portrait to his majesty. But how to procure this portrait? Her husband was her very shadow and never left her. Le petit saint, who was never at a loss, issued a lettre de cachet against him, and the unfortunate man was shut up in fort l'Evêque. It was not until the portrait was finished that he was set at

He returned to his home without guessing at the motives of his detention, but he learned that his wife had had her portrait painted during his absence, and his jealousy was set to work. Soon a letter from Girard, a fatal letter, which fell into his hands, convinced him of the injury done him. He took his wife apart, and, feigning a resignation which he did not feel, "My love," he said, "I loved thee; I love thee still. I thought, too, that thou

wert content with our competence and wouldst not have quitted thine husband for any other in the world: I have been convinced otherwise. A letter from Girard informs me that with thine own consent the king, whom thy portrait has pleased, desires to see thee this very day. It is a misfortune, but we must submit. Only before thou art established at Versailles I should wish thee to dine with me once more. You can invite cousin Girard, too, for I owe him something for what he has done for thee."

The young wife promised to return and see her husband. That evening at the performance at the court she was seated in the same box with the marquise de Laugeac; the king's glass was directed towards her the whole time, and at the termination of the spectacle it was announced to her that she was to sleep at the château the next evening. The project was never realized.

The next day, according to promise, the young wife went to Paris with the valet. She informed her husband of the success which had befallen her, and he appeared delighted. Dinner being ready, they seated themselves at table, ate and drank. Girard began to laugh at his cousin for his complaisance, when suddenly all desire to iest left him. He experienced most horrible pains, and his cousin suffered as well as himself. "Wretches!" said Gaubert to them, "did you think I would brook dishonor? No! no! I have deceived you both the better to wreak my vengeance! I am now happy. Neither king nor valet shall ever possess my wife. I have poisoned you, and you must die." The two victims implored his pity. "Yes," said he to his wife, "thy sufferings pain me, and I will free you from them." He then plunged a knife to her heart, and, turning to Girard, said: "As for thee, I hate thee too much to kill thee. Die!" And he left him.

The next day M. de Sartines came and told me the whole story. He had learnt it from the valet, who had survived his poisoning for some hours. Gaubert could not be found, and it was feared that he would attempt



"OH, COSSÉ, HAVE I HURT YOU, HAVE I HURT YOU?"

This scene is from David Belasco's play, "Du Barry," played at Belasco's Theatre, New York, with Mrs. Leslie Carter as La Du Barry.





some desperate deed. No one dared mention it to the king, but the captain of the guards and the first gentle-man-in-waiting took every possible precaution, and when Louis XV. asked for the young woman who was to be brought to him they told him that she had died of a violent distemper. It was not until some days afterwards that the terror which pervaded the château ceased. They had found the body of the unfortunate Gaubert on the banks of the Seine.

In spite of what had passed the duc de la Vrillière had the impudence to present himself to me. I treated him with disdain, reproaching him and de Laugeac for their conduct. He left me in despair, and wrote me the following letter:

"Madame la Comtesse—Your anger kills me. I am guilty, but not so much so as you may imagine. The duty of my office compels me to do many things which are disagreeable to me. In the affair for which you have so slightingly treated me there was no intent to injure you, but only to procure for the king an amusement which should make him the more appreciate your charms and your society. Forgive a fault in which my heart bore no share; I am sufficiently miserable, and shall not know repose until I be reinstated in your good graces.

"As for the poor marchioness, she is no more to blame than myself. She feels for you as much esteem as attachment, and is anxious to prove it at any opportunity. I beseech you not to treat her rigorously. Think that we only work together for the good of the king, and that it would be unjust of you to hate us because we have endeavored to please this excellent prince. I hope that, contented with this justification, you will not refuse to grant me the double amnesty which I ask of your goodness."

I replied thus:

"Your letter, monsieur le duc, seduces me no more than your words. I know you well and appreciate you fully. I was ignorant up to this time that amongst the duties of your office certain such functions were imposed upon you. It appears that you attend to them as well as to others, and I sincerely compliment you thereupon. I beg of you to announce it in the 'Court Kalendar.' It will add, I am convinced, to the universal esteem in which you are held.

322 MEMOIRS OF JEANNE VAUBERNIER

"As to madame de Laugeac, she is even more insignificant than you, and that is not saying much. I thank her for her esteem and attachment, but can dispense with any marks of them; no good can come from such a one as she. Thus, monsieur le duc, keep quiet, both of you, and do not again attempt measures which may compromise me. Do your business and leave me to mine.

"I am, with all due consideration,

"Your servant,

"LA COMTESSE DU BARRY."

I mentioned this to the king, who insisted on reconciling me with le petit saint, who came and knelt to me. I granted the pardon sought out of regard for Louis XV., but from that moment the contempt I felt for the duke increased a hundredfold.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Conversation with the king—Marriage of the comte d'Artois— Intrigues—The place of lady of honor—The maréchale de Mirepoix—The comtesse de Forcalquier and madame du Barry—The comtesse de Forcalquier and madame de Boncault.

THE king was much annoyed at the indifference I evinced for all state secrets, and frequently observed to me: "You are not at all like madame de Pompadour. She was never satisfied unless she knew all that was going on and was permitted to take an active part in every transaction. She would frequently scold me for not telling her things of which I myself was ignorant. She was at the bottom of the most secret intrigues, and watched every turn of my countenance as if she sought to read in my eyes the inmost thoughts of my mind. Never," continued the king, "did woman more earnestly desire supreme command, and so completely had she learned to play my part that I have frequently surprised her giving private instructions to my ambassadors, differing altogether from what I myself had dictated to them. Upon the same principle she maintained at various courts envoys and ministers who acted by her orders and in her name. She even succeeded in obtaining the friendship of the grave and austere Marie Thérèse, who ultimately carried her condescension so far as only to address the marchioness by the title of 'cousin' and 'dear friend.' I must confess, however, that these proceedings on the part of madame de Pompadour were by no means agreeable to me, and I even prefer your ignorance of politics to her incessant interference with them."

This was said by Louis XV. upon the occasion of the approaching marriage of the comte d'Artois, the object of universal cabal and court intrigue to all but myself, who

preserved perfect tranquillity amidst the general excitement that prevailed.

Various reasons made the marriage of this prince a matter of imperative necessity. In the first place, the open gallantry of the young count had attracted a crowd of disreputable personages of both sexes to Versailles, and many scandalous adventures occurred within the château itself; secondly, a motive still more important in the eyes of Louis XV. originated in the circumstance of neither the marriage of the dauphin nor that of the comte de Provence having been blessed with offspring. The king began to despair of seeing any descendants in a direct line, unless indeed heaven should smile upon the wedded life of the comte d'Artois. Louis XV. disliked the princes of the blood, and the bare idea that the duc d'Orléans might one day wield his sceptre would have been worse than death.

Many alliances were proposed for the prince. Marie Josèphe, infanta of Spain, was then in her twentieth year, and consequently too old. The princess Marie-Françoise-Bénédictine-Anne-Elizabeth-Josèphe-Antonine-Laurence-Ignace-Thérèse-Gertrude-Marguerite-Rose, etc., etc., of Portugal, although younger than the first-mentioned lady. was yet considered as past the age that would have rendered her a suitable match for so youthful a bridegroom. The daughter of any of the electoral houses of Germany was not considered an eligible match, and the pride of the house of Bourbon could not stoop to so ignoble an alliance. There was no alternative left, therefore, but to return to the house of Savoy and take a sister of the comtesse de Provence. This proposal was well received by the royal family, with the exception of the dauphiness. who dreaded the united power and influence of the two sisters if circumstances should ever direct it against herself or her wishes; and I heard from good authority that both the imperial Marie Thérèse and her daughter made many remonstrances to the king upon the subject. "The empress," said Louis XV. one day, "believes that things are still managed here as in the days of the marquise de Pompadour and the duc de Choiseul. Thank heaven, I am no longer under the dominion of my friend and her pensionaires. I shall follow my own inclinations and consult in the marriage of my grandson the interests of France rather than those of Austria."

The little attention paid by Louis XV. to the representations of Marie Thérèse furnished my enemies with a fresh pretext for venting their spleen. They accused me of having been bribed by the court of Turin, which ardently desired a second alliance with France. I was most unjustly accused, for I can with truth affirm that the comte de la Marmora, ambassador from Piedmont to Paris, neither by word nor deed made any attempt to interest me in his success. The king was the first person who informed me of the contemplated marriage, and my only fault (if it could be called one) was having approved of the match.

More than one intrigue was set on foot within the château to separate the princes. Many were the attempts to sow the seeds of dissension between the dauphin and the comte d'Artois, as well as to embroil the dauphin with monsieur. The first attempt proved abortive, but the faction against monsieur succeeded so far as to excite a lasting jealousy and mistrust in the mind of Marie Antoinette. This princess was far from contemplating the marriage of the comte d'Artois with any feelings of pleasure, and when her new sister-in-law became a mother she bewailed her own misfortune in being without children with all the feelings of a young and affectionate heart. Heaven did not, however, always deny her the boon she so ardently desired.

You will readily believe that the same anxiety prevailed upon the occasion of this approaching marriage as had existed at the unions of the dauphin and the comte de Provence to obtain the various posts and places the ambition of different persons led them to desire in the establishment of the newly married pair. Wishing on my own part to offer the maréchale de Mirepoix a proof of my high estimation of her friendship towards me, I inquired of her whether a superior employment about the person of the comtesse d'Artois would be agreeable to her.

"Alas! my dear creature," replied the good-natured maréchale, "I am too old now to bear the toil and confinement of any service. The post of lady of honor would suit me excellently well as far as regards the income attached to it, but would by no means agree with my inclinations as to discharging its functions. You see I am perfectly candid with you. Listen to me: if you really wish to oblige me you can do this: give the title to another and bestow the pecuniary part of the engagement on me. In that manner you will be able to gratify two persons at the same time."

"I will endeavor," said I, "to meet your wishes as far as I possibly can, and you may be assured that you shall derive some advantage from this marriage."

And I kept my word by shortly after obtaining for the maréchale a sum of fifty thousand livres: a most needful supply, for the poor maréchale had to refurnish her house, her present fittings-up being no longer endurable to the eye of modish taste. She likewise received an augmentation of twenty thousand livres to her pension. This proceeding was highly acceptable to her, and the king afforded his assistance with the best possible grace. He could be generous and do things with a good grace when he pleased.

The refusal of the maréchale, which it was agreed we should keep secret, obliged me to cast about for a worthy substitute, and I at length decided upon selecting the comtesse de Forcalquier, a lady who possessed every charm which can please and attract, joined to a faultless reputation, and, setting aside her strict intimacy with

myself, the court (envious as it is) could find no fault with her. I was convinced she would not be long in acquiring an ascendancy over the mind of the princess, and I was equally well assured she would never turn this influence against myself. This was a point of no small importance to me.

Madame de Forcalquier most ardently desired the place of lady of honor, without flattering herself with any hopes of obtaining it, and, not liking to ask me openly for it, she applied to the duc de Cossé. I felt some regret that she had gone to work in so circuitous a manner, and in consequence wrote her the following note:

"Madame-I am aware that you are desirous of obtaining the post of lady of honor. You should not have forgotten that I am sufficiently your friend to have forwarded your wishes by every possible exertion. Why did you apply to a third person in preference to seeking my aid? I really am more than half angry with you for so doing. Believe me, my friends need not the intervention of any mediator to secure my best services. You. too, will regret not having made your first application to me when I tell you that I was reserving for you the very place you were seeking by so circuitous a route. Yes, before you had asked it, the post of lady of honor was yours. I might have sought in vain for a person more eminently qualified for the office than yourself, or one in whom I could place more unlimited confidence. Come, my friend, I pray of you, not to thank me, who have found sufficient reward in the pleasure of obliging you, but to acknowledge the extreme kindness and alacrity with which his majesty has forwarded your wishes.

"Believe me, dear madame,

"Yours very sincerely,
"LA COMTESSE DU BARRY."

Madame de Forcalquier was not long in obeying the summons contained in my note. She embraced me with the warmest gratitude and friendship, delighted at finding herself so eligibly established at court, for at that period every person regarded the comte d'Artois as the only hope of the monarchy, and, blinded by the universal preference bestowed on him, the young prince flattered him-

self that the crown would infallibly ornament his brows. I have been told that when first the queen's pregnancy was perceived a general lamentation was heard throughout the castle, and all ranks united in deploring an event which removed the comte d'Artois from the immediate succession to the throne.

Up to the present moment I knew madame de Forcalquier only as one whose many charms, both of mind and person, joined to great conversational powers and the liveliest wit, had rendered her the idol of society and obtained for her the appellation "Bellissima." I knew not that this woman, so light and trifling in appearance, was capable of one of those lively and sincere attachments which neither time nor change of fortune could destroy or diminish. She had a particular friend, a madame Boncault, the widow of a stockbroker, and she was anxious to contribute to her well-doing. With this view she solicited of me the place of lady-in-waiting for this muchesteemed individual. Astonished at the request, I put a hasty negative on it.

"If you refuse me this fresh favor," said madame de Forcalquier, "you will prevent me from profiting by your kindness to myself."

"And why so?" inquired I.

"I owe to madame Boncault," answered she, "more than my life; I am indebted to her for tranquillity, honor, and the high estimation in which the world has been pleased to hold me. I have now an opportunity of proving my gratitude, and I beseech of you to assist my endeavors."

"But tell me, first," cried I, "what is the nature of this very important service you say madame de Boncault has rendered you. Is it a secret, or may I hear it?"

"You may," replied the countess; "although the recital is calculated to bring the blush of shame into my cheek. Are we alone and secure from interruption?"

I rang and gave orders that no person should be suf-

fered to disturb us, after which madame de Forcalquier proceeded as follows:

"I was scarcely seventeen years old when my parents informed me that they had disposed of my hand, and that I must prepare myself to receive a husband immediately. My sentiments were not inquired into, nor, to confess the truth, was such an investigation usual or deemed a matter of any import. A young woman of any rank has no voice in any transaction till the day which follows her marriage; until then her wishes are those of her family, and her desires bounded by the rules of worldly etiquette. I had scarcely conversed twice or thrice with my future lord, and then only for a few minutes at a time, before he conducted me to the foot of the altar. there to pronounce the solemn vow which bound me his for life. I had scarcely seen him, and barely knew whether he was agreeable or disagreeable. He was neither young nor old, handsome nor ugly, pleasing nor displeasing: just one of those persons of whom the world is principally composed; one of those men who enter or leave a saloon without the slightest curiosity being excited respecting them. I had been told that I ought to love my husband, and accordingly I taught myself to do so; but scarcely had the honeymoon waned than my fickle partner transferred his affections from me to one of my attendants, and to such a height did his guilty passion carry him that he quitted his home for Italy, carrying with him the unfortunate victim of his seductive arts. It was during his absence that I first became acquainted with madame Boncault. She was my own age, and equally unfortunate in her domestic life; the same tests, griefs, and a great similarity of temper and disposition soon united us in bonds of the firmest friendship; but as she possessed a stronger and more reasonable mind than I did she forgot her own sorrows to administer to mine. However, if the whole truth must be owned, I ought to confess that my chief consolation was derived from a young

cousin of my own, who freely lavished upon me that unbounded affection I would fain have sought from my husband.

"Meanwhile, wearied of his folly, this latter returned, and, after having transferred his capricious fancies to at least half a dozen mistresses, he finished where he should have begun by attaching himself to her who, as his wife, had every claim to his homage. Men are unaccountable creatures, but unfortunately for my husband his senses returned too late; my heart was too entirely occupied to restore him to that place he had so hastily vacated. My affections were no longer mine to bestow, but equally shared by my estimable friend madame Boncault and my young and captivating cousin. I was a bad hand at dissimulating, and M. de Forcalquier perceived enough of my sentiments to excite his jealous suspicions, and immediately removed with me to one of his estates.

"However, my cousin (whom my husband was far from suspecting) and madame Boncault accompanied me in my retreat. There myself and my admirer, more thrown together than we had been at Paris, began insensibly to lay aside the restraint we had hitherto imposed on our inclination and commenced a train of imprudences which would quickly have betrayed us had not friendship watched over us. The excellent madame Boncault, in order to save my reputation, took so little care to preserve her own that M. Forcalquier was completely caught by her manœuvre. One morning, finding me alone, he said:

"'Madame, I am by no means satisfied with what is going on here. Your friend is wholly devoid of shame and modesty. She has been with us but one short fortnight, and is now the open and confessed mistress of your cousin.'

"'Sir,' I exclaimed, trembling for what was to follow, 'you are, you must be, mistaken: the thing is impossible, Madame Boncault is incapable—'

"Nonsense, madame!" replied M. de Forcalquier; 'I know what I am saying. Several things have induced me to suspect for a long while what I now assert with perfect confidence of its truth; but if you are still incredulous, behold this proof of guilt which I found just now in your cousin's chamber.'

"So saying, my husband put into my hands a letter written by my cousin evidently to some woman in the château whom he solicited to admit him that evening to the usual place of rendezvous, where he flattered himself their late misunderstanding would be cleared up.

"After reading, or, to speak more correctly, guessing at, the contents of this fatal letter I conjured my husband to replace it where he had found it, lest his guests should suspect him of having dishonorably obtained possession of their secret. He quitted me, and I hastened in search of my friend. I threw myself on my knees before her and related all that had passed, accusing myself of the basest selfishness in having consented to save my honor at the expense of hers; then rising, with renewed courage I declared my intention of confessing my imprudence to my husband. Madame Boncault withheld me. 'Do you doubt my regard for you?' asked she. 'If indeed you do justice to my sincere attachment to you, permit me to make this one sacrifice for your safety. Leave your husband at liberty to entertain his present suspicions respecting me, but grant me one favor in your turn. Speak to your cousin; request him to quit the château, for should he remain the truth will be discovered, and then, my friend, you are lost past my endeavors to save you.'

"Less generous than madame Boncault, I consented to follow her advice. However, I have never forgotten her generous devotion, and now that the opportunity has presented itself of proving my gratitude I beseech of you, my dear countess, to aid me in the discharge of my debt of gratitude."

As madame de Forcalquier finished speaking I threw

332 MEMOIRS OF JEANNE VAUBERNIER

myself into her arms. "From this moment," cried I, "madame Boncault is my dear and esteemed protégée, and if I have any influence over the mind of the king she shall be appointed lady-in-waiting to our young princess. Such a woman is a treasure, and I heartily thank you for having mentioned her to me."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Marriage of madame Boncault—The comte de Bourbon Busset— Marriage of comte d'Hargicourt—Disgrace of the comte de Broglie—He is replaced by M. Lemoine—The king complains of ennui—Conversations on the subject—Entry into Paris.

PITE of the merit of madame Boncault and the many eulogiums I bestowed on her whilst relating her history to the king, I could not immediately obtain the post madame de Forcalquier had requested for this paragon of friends. His majesty replied to me by saying that no doubt so many virtues merited a high reward, but that ere madame Boncault could be appointed lady-in-waiting to his granddaughter she must be presented at court under some other name than the one she now bore. "Oh, if that be all, sire," replied I, "it will soon be effected. Ladies who have the good fortune to possess a rich dowry and powerful friends need never look far for a choice of husbands. Only let madame Boncault have reason to reckon upon your patronage, and she will have no lack of admirers."

The king, always ready to oblige me, caused it to be understood throughout the château that he was desirous of seeing madame Boncault well established, as he had it in contemplation to confide to her a place of great trust. Immediately a score of suitors presented themselves; the preference was given to the comte de Bourbon Busset as the person most calculated in every respect to answer our purpose. He possessed elegant manners, an unblemished reputation, and a descent so illustrious as to be traced even to the reigning family. No sooner were the celebrations of this marriage over than I procured the formal appointment of madame de Bourbon Busset to the post of ladyin-waiting to the new princess. This nomination tended greatly to increase the high opinion entertained of the

judgment and discrimination of the comtesse de Forcalquier, and you may easily believe, from the friendship I bore this lady, that I fully entered into her triumph on the occasion.

When the comtesse de Bourbon Busset came to return me her acknowledgments for what I had done she accompanied it with a request for a fresh interference on my part. This was to obtain for her husband the title of duke and peer. Accordingly I mentioned her wishes to the king, observing at the same time how very surprising it was that one so nearly related to the house of Bourbon should not have reached the honors of the ducal peerage: to which Louis XV. replied that he had no desire to increase the number of princes of the blood, of whom there were quite sufficient of legitimate birth without placing the illegitimate upon the same footing; that Louis XIV. had been a sufficient warning of the folly of acting too indulgently towards these latter, who were only so many additional enemies to the royal authority. To all this I answered that it was not fitting to treat the family of Bourbon Busset, however illegitimate might be its origin, as if it merely belonged to the petite noblesse, etc.. but my arguments were in vain, and, as the proverb says, "I talked to the wind." My friends recommended me not to press the subject, and the matter ended there. ever, in order to smooth the refusal as much as possible. I procured M. de Bourbon Busset the appointment of first gentleman usher to the young prince.

The establishment of the comtesse d'Artois was now formed. M. de Chéglus, bishop of Cahors, had the post of first almoner, and, strange to say, although a prelate, he was a man of irreproachable virtue. He had little wit, but strong sense, and was better known by his many charitable deeds than by the brilliancy of his sayings. He was eminently suited for the office now conferred on him, and those who knew him best were the least surprised to find the nomination had fallen on him.

I also procured a post in the establishment of the young couple for my sister-in-law, the comtesse d'Hargicourt. Her maiden name was Fumel, an ancient family in Guienne, and M. de Fumel, her father, was governor of the château Trompette at Bordeaux. This marriage had at first encountered many difficulties from the deadly hatred which existed in the château against us. Comte Jean, perceiving that things were going against us, applied to the king himself for assistance in the affair. Louis XV. could not endure him, but his dislike was manifested only by an uneasy timidity in his presence. and he freely granted any request that would the soonest free him from his presence. The king acted upon the same principle in the present conjuncture. He bestowed a million livres upon the comte d'Hargicourt—that is to say, five hundred thousand livres to be employed in paying the debts of the comte de Fumel, and in freeing his estates from a dowry of sixty thousand livres to be paid to his daughter on her marriage, with various other clearances and payments; besides this, my brother-in-law, comte d'Hargicourt, was appointed captain in the prince's Swiss guards, one of the most honorable commissions that could have been conferred on him.

The comte de Crussel and the prince d'Henin were named captains of the guard to M. d'Artois. This prince d'Henin was of such diminutive stature that he was sometimes styled, by way of jest, the "prince of dwarfs," or "the dwarf of princes." He was the beloved nephew of the maréchale de Mirepoix, whose fondness could not supply him with the sense he so greatly needed. He was, besides, very profligate and continually running into some difficulty or other by his eager pursuit after pleasure. It is related of him that the duc de Lauragnais, wearied with seeing the prince d'Henin forever fluttering about his mistress, mademoiselle Arnoult, drew up a consultation to inquire whether it were possible to die of ennui; this he submitted to several physicians and cele-

brated lawyers, who, having united in replying affirmatively, he caused the consultation with its answer to be forwarded to the prince d'Henin, warning him henceforward to cease his visits to mademoiselle Arnoult, or, in the event of her death, he would certainly be taken up as a party concerned in effecting it.

The opposite party was now more irritated than ever by the many places and employments I caused to be given either to my own friends or to those for whom they solicited my interest. The duchesse de Grammont, flattering herself that she might now take the field against me with advantage, arrived in Paris one fine morning from Chanteloup. Those about me were full of wrath, I know not why, at her arrival; but I explained to them that they were mistaken in supposing madame de Grammont an exile. She had voluntarily accompanied her brother into his retreat, and when that was no longer agreeable to her she returned to Paris. However, her journey did neither good nor harm; she had many invitations to fêtes given in honor of herself, was frequently asked to dinners, balls. etc., but that was all. No person set his wits to work to reinstate her in the good graces of the king. I soon comprehended her forlorn hopes, and my former animosity soon gave way to the pity with which she inspired me.

About the period of the marriage of the comtesse d'Artois an individual of some eminence fell into disgrace: this was the comte de Broglie. This gentleman, as you know, was private minister to Louis XV., intrusted for some time past with his correspondence, and affected the airs of a favorite. He solicited upon the present occasion the honor of going to meet the princess at the bridge of Beauvoisin, a request which was granted. This was not sufficient for him; he begged for a month's leave of absence, with permission to proceed to Turin. This depended on the duc d'Aiguillon, who was by no means partial to the comte de Broglie. He said to me when speaking of him:

"I feel no inclination to oblige this minister; on the contrary, he may wait long enough for what he desires as far as I am concerned."

"I fear he will be greatly offended with you," I answered.

"Oh, never mind that," replied the duke; "if he grows sullen about it, why, well; if he is loud and vehement, better still; and should his anger lead him to the commission of any act of folly, depend upon it we shall take advantage of it."

As I foresaw, the comte de Broglie was deeply offended and wrote to the duc d'Aiguillon a letter full of imprudent expressions. This was exactly what this latter desired, who eagerly carried and read the paper to the different members of the council, who heard it with every expression of surprise and displeasure; the king viewed it as a piece of open rebellion, and resolved to punish the writer with his heaviest displeasure. The duc d'Aiguillon asked nothing better, and ere an hour had elapsed the duc de la Vrillière received orders to draw up a lettre de cachet in which the king expressed his discontent with the comte de Broglie, deprived him of the commission he had given him to go and receive the princess of Savoy, and exiled him to Buffée, one of his estates near Angoulême.

This was a matter of great talk at the château; no one could imagine what had made the comte de Broglie conduct himself so foolishly. It was at this period that M. de Marchault said of him, when he saw him pass his house on his way to Buffée, "He has the ministry by the tail."

M. de Broglie having gone, his majesty was compelled to look out for another confidant, and raised to that eminence M. Lemoine, clerk of his closet. M. Lemoine in an inferior station had shown himself competent to fill the highest offices in the state. Such abilities are rare. He was an excellent lawyer, admirable chancellor of ex-

chequer, and had the king said to him, "I make thee a general," he would the next day have commanded armies and gained victories. Despite his merit he lived long unknown: the reason was obvious—he knew nothing of intrigue; and his wife, though pretty, was discreet; and these are not the means to advance a man at court.

Louis XV., who knew something of men when he chose to study them, was not slow in detecting the talent of Lemoine, and in consequence gave him that station in which de Broglie had been installed. No sooner had Lemoine glanced over the affairs submitted to his control than he became master of them as much as if they had occupied the whole of his life, and in a short time he gave to his situation an importance which it had never before reached. Unwilling, however, to incur hatred, he enveloped himself in profound mystery, so much so that nobody, with the exception of Messrs. d'Aiguillon and de Sartines, knew anything of his labors. This pleased the king, who was averse to publicity.

The duc d'Aiguillon could not conceal his joy at being freed from de Broglie, his most troublesome colleague. It was a grand point gained for him, as he could now make sure of the post of secretary-at-war, the main object of his ambition. He wished to be placed in the duc de Choiseul's position, and to effect this he redoubled his attentions towards the king, who, though not really regarding him, soon treated him as the dearest of his subjects. There are inexplicable mysteries in weak characters; obstinacy alarms them, and they yield, hating resistance.

The king was ennuyé to death, and became daily more dull and heavy. I saw his gloom without knowing how to disperse it, but it did not make me particularly uncomfortable. Occupied with my dear duc de Brissac I almost forgot his majesty for him: the maréchale de Mirepoix, who had more experience than I had in the affairs at Versailles, and who knew the king well, was alarmed at my negligence, and spoke to me of it.

"Do you not see," she said one day, "what a crisis is at hand?"

"What crisis?" I asked.

"The king is dying of ennui."

"True."

"Does it not alarm you?" said the maréchale.

"Why should it?"

"What makes him so? Think well when I tell you that your mortal enemy has seized Louis XV.; your most redoubtable enemy, ennui!"

"Very well; but what would you have me do?"

"You must amuse him."

"That is easier said than done."

"You are right, but it is compulsory. Believe me, kings are not moulded like other men: early disgusted with all things, they exist only in a variety of pleasures; what pleases them this evening will displease them tomorrow. They wish to be happy in a different way. Louis XV. is more kingly in this respect than any other. You must devise amusements for him."

"Alas!" I replied, "how? Shall I give him a new tragedy of la Harpe's, he will yawn; an opera of Marmontel, he will go to sleep. Heavens! how unfortunate I am!"

"Really, my dear," replied the maréchale, "I cannot advise you; but I can quote a powerful example. In such a case madame de Pompadour would have admitted a rival near the throne."

"Madame de Pompadour was very amiable, my dear," I replied, "and I would have done so once or twice, but the part of Mother Gourdan does not suit me; I prefer that of her young ladies."

At these words the maréchale laughed, whilst I made a long, grave face. At this instant comte Jean entered and exclaimed:

"Really, ladies, you present a singular contrast. May I ask you, sister, what causes this sorrow? What ails you?"

"Oh, brother!" was my response, "the king is dying of ennui!"

"That is no marvel," said my brother-in-law.

"And to rouse him," I added, "it is necessary, the maréchale says, that I must take a pretty girl by the hand and present her to the king with these words: 'Sire, having found that you grow tired of me, I present this lady to you that you may amuse yourself with her.'"

"That would be very fine," replied comte Jean; "it would show him that you had profited by my advice." Then, whispering in my ear, "You know, sister, I am ca-

pable of the greatest sacrifices for the king."

"What are you saying, comte Jean?" asked the maréchale, who had heard some words.

"I said to my sister," answered he, coolly, "that she ought to be executed to please the king."

"And you, too, brother!" I cried.

"Yes, sister," said he, with a theatrical tone, "I see the dire necessity, and submit to it unrepiningly. Let us yield to fate, or rather let us so act as to make it favorable to us. The king requires some amusement, and let us find him a little maid. We must take heed not to present any fine lady: no, no, by all the devils— Excuse me, maréchale, 'tis a habit I have."

"It is nature, you mean," replied the maréchale; "the nightingale is born to sing, and you, comte Jean, were born to swear. Is it not true?"

"Morbleu, madame, you are right."

After this conversation the maréchale went out, and comte Jean departed to arrange his plans for the king's amusement.

However, the ennui of Louis XV. was somewhat dissipated by the tidings of the various incidents which occurred at the grand entry of the dauphin and dauphiness into Paris. We learnt that the duc de Brissac, as governor of Paris, on receiving the dauphiness, said:

"Madame, you see about you two hundred thousand

lovers." He was right; Marie Antoinette looked like an angel. I had taken a mortal aversion to her. Alas! circumstances have too fully avenged me: this unfortunate queen loses popularity daily; her perfidious friends have sacrificed her to their interests. I pity her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Visit from a stranger—Madame de Pompadour and a Jacobinical monk—Continuation of this history—Deliverance of a state prisoner—A meeting with the stranger.

NE day, at an hour at which I was not accustomed to see any person, a lady called and requested to see me. She was informed that I was visible to no person. No matter, she persisted in her request, saying that she had to speak to me upon matters of the first importance, and declared that I should be delighted with her visit. However, my servants, accustomed to the artifices practised by persons wishing to see me for interested purposes, heeded very little the continued protestations of my strange applicant, and peremptorily refused to admit her, upon which the unknown retired with the indication of extreme anger.

Two hours afterwards a note bearing no signature was brought me, in which the late scene was described to me, and I was further informed that the lady so abruptly repulsed by my servants had presented herself to communicate things which concerned not only my own personal safety but the welfare of all France: a frightful catastrophe was impending which there was still time to prevent; the means of so doing were offered me, and I was conjured not to reject them. The affair, if treated with indifference, would bring on incalculable misfortunes and horrors, to which I should be the first victim. All this apparent mystery would be cleared up and the whole affair explained if I would repair on the following day at one o'clock to the baths of Apollo. A grove of trees there was pointed out as a safe place of rendezvous, and. being so very near my residence, calculated to remove any fears I might entertain of meeting a stranger who, as the note informed me, possessed the means of entering this secluded spot. I was again conjured to be punctual to the appointed hour as I valued my life.

The mysterious and solemn tone of this singular epistle struck me with terror. Madame de Mirepoix was with me at the moment I received it. This lady had a peculiar skill in physiognomy, and the close attention she always paid to mine was frequently extremely embarrassing and disagreeable. She seemed (as was usual) on the present occasion to read all that was passing in my mind. However, less penetrating eyes than hers might easily have perceived by my sudden agitation that the paper I held in my hand contained something more than usual.

"What ails you?" asked she, with the familiarity our close intimacy warranted; "does that note bring you any bad news?"

"No," said I; "it tells me nothing, but it leaves me ample room for much uneasiness and alarm; but, after all, it may be merely some hoax, some foolish jest played off at my expense; but judge for yourself." So saying, I handed her the letter. When she had perused it she said:

"Upon my word, if I were in your place, I would clear up this mystery. Good advice is not so easily met with as to make it a matter of difficulty to go as far as the baths of Apollo to seek it. It is by no means impossible but that, as this paper tells you, some great peril is hanging over you. The marquise de Pompadour," continued madame de Mirepoix, "received more than once invitations similar to this, which she never failed to attend; and I recollect one circumstance in which she had no cause to regret having done so. Without the kind offices of one of these anonymous writers it is very possible that she might have expired heartbroken, and perhaps forsaken, in some state prison, instead of ending her days in the château of Versailles, honored even to the tomb by the friendship and regard of the king of France."

I asked my friend to explain her last observation, and she replied as follows;

"One day an anonymous billet similar to this was left for madame de Pompadour; it requested her to repair at a specified hour to the church of the Jacobins, rue Saint-Honoré, in Paris, where she was promised some highly important communications. The marchioness was punctual to the rendezvous, and as she entered the church a Jacobite, so entirely wrapped in his capuchin as to conceal his features, approached her, took her by the hand and conducted her to an obscure chapel, where, requesting her to sit down, he took a seat himself, and began as follows:

"'Madame, you are about to lose the favor of the king; a party is at work to give a new mistress to the king; the lady is young, beautiful, witty, and possessed of an insatiable ambition. For the last six months she has been in the daily habit of seeing the king, unknown to you and all the court, and this has been accomplished in the following manner: Her father is valet de chamber to his majesty, and she has an only brother, two years younger than herself, whose astonishing resemblance to her has created continual mistakes; this brother is promised the inheritance of his father's office, and under pretext of acquiring the due initiation for future post has been permitted every morning to attend the king's rising.

"'However, this embryo page is the sister, who comes each morning disguised in her brother's clothes. The king has had many private conversations with the designing beauty, and, seduced by her many charms of mind and person, as well as dazzled by the hidden and concealed nature of their intrigue, finds his passion for her increases from day to day. Many are the designing persons ready to profit by the transfer of the king's affections from you to this fresh favorite, and they flatter themselves the desired event is close at hand. You are to be confined by a lettre de cachet to the island of Sainte-Marguerite, for the place of your exile is already chosen. The principal conspirators are two powerful noblemen.

one of whom is reputed your most intimate friend. I learned all these particulars,' continued the Jacobite, 'from a young penitent, but not under the seal of confession. This penitent is the particular friend of the woman in question, who confided the secret to her, from whom I received it, accompanied by the most flattering promises of future protection and advancement. These splendid prospects excited her jealous envy, and she came here to confess the whole to me, requesting I would seek you out and inform you of the whole affair. Here is a letter she obtained unknown to her aspiring friend, which she wishes you to see, as a pledge of the veracity of her statement.' The marchioness cast her eyes over the paper held out to her by the Jacobite. It was a letter addressed by the king to his new mistress.

"You may imagine the terror of madame de Pompadour, her anxiety and impatience to return to Versailles. However, ere she quitted the friendly monk she assured him of her lasting gratitude, and begged of him to point out how she could best prove it. 'For myself,' replied he, 'I ask nothing; but if you would render me your debtor confer the first vacant bishopric on a man whom I greatly esteem, the abbé de Barral.' You will easily suppose that the abbé de Barral had not long to wait for his preferment. As for the Jacobite, the marchioness never again saw or heard anything of him. She mentioned him to the newly appointed bishop, who could not even understand to what she alluded. She related the affair, when he called heaven to witness that he knew nothing of any Jacobite either directly or indirectly."

"And how did the marchioness get rid of her rival?" inquired I of madame de Mirepoix.

"By a very simple and effective expedient. She sent for the duc de Saint-Florentin, whom she requested immediately to expedite two lettres de cachet: one for the valet de chambre, who was shut up in the château de Lectoure, and the other for the daughter, whom the marchioness sent to the isle of Sainte-Marguerite, to occupy the place she had so obligingly destined for herself."

"And now," asked I, "did these unfortunate people ever

get out of prison?"

"That I know not," answered the maréchale; "and, God forgive me! for aught I ever inquired they may be there now."

"If so," cried I, "the conduct of both the king and the duc de la Vrillière is abominable and unpardonable."

"Why, bless your heart, my dear!" exclaimed the maréchale, "do you expect that his majesty should recollect all the pretty women he has intrigued with, any more than the poor duke can be expected to keep a list in his memory of the different persons he has sent to a prison? He would require a prodigious recollection for such a purpose."

This unfeeling reply filled me with indignation and redoubled the pity I already felt for the poor prisoners. I immediately despatched a note to the duc de Saint-Florentin, requesting he would come to me without delay. He hastened to obey my summons. When he had heard my recital he remained silent some minutes, as if recalling his recollections upon the subject, and then replied:

"I do indeed remember that some obscure woman was confined in the château of the îsle Sainte-Marguerite at the request of madame de Pompadour, but I cannot now say whether at the death of the marchioness any person thought of interceding for her release."

"That is precisely what I wish to ascertain," cried I.
"Return to your offices, monsieur le duc, and use your
best endeavors to discover whether this unfortunate girl
and her parent are still in confinement; nor venture again
in my presence until you have despatched the order for
their deliverance; you will procure a conveyance for them
from their prison to Paris at the expense of government.
You understand, my lord?"

The following morning the duke brought me the de-

sired information. He told me that the father had been dead seven years, but the daughter still remained a prisoner; the order for restoring her to liberty had been forwarded the night preceding. I will now briefly relate the end of this mournful story.

Three weeks after this I received an early visit from the duc de la Vrillière, who came to apprise me that my protégée from the isle of Sainte-Marguerite was in my antechamber awaiting permission to offer me her grateful thanks. I desired she might instantly be admitted: her appearance shocked me: not a single trace of that beauty which had proved so fatal to its possessor now remained. She was pale, emaciated, and her countenance, on which care and confinement had imprinted the wrinkles of premature old age, was sad and dejected even to idiocy. I could have wished that madame de Pompadour, by way of punishment for her cruelty, could but have seen the object of her relentless persecution. I think she would have blushed for herself. When the poor girl entered my apartment she looked wildly around her, and, casting herself at my feet, inquired with many tears to what motive she was indebted for my generous interference in her behalf. The duc de la Vrillière contemplated with the utmost sang froid the spectacle of a misery he had so largely contributed to. I requested of him to leave us to ourselves. I then raised my weeping protégée, consoled her to the best of my ability, and then requested her to give me the history of her captivity. Her story was soon told. She had been an inhabitant of the same prison for seventeen years and five months without either seeing a human being or hearing the sound of a human voice. Her recital made me shudder, and I promised her that henceforward her life should be rendered as happy as it had hitherto been miserable.

The king supped with me that evening. By some singular chance he was on this occasion in the happiest temper possible: he laughed, sang, joked with such unusual

spirits that I hesitated ere I disturbed a gayety to which Louis XV. was so little prone. However, I took him aside, saying: "Sire, I have to ask atonement and reparation for a most horrible piece of injustice." After which I proceeded to acquaint him with the distressing history of his unfortunate mistress. He appeared perfectly well to recollect the woman to whom I alluded, and when I ceased speaking he said, with a half-suppressed sigh:

"Poor creature! she has indeed been unfortunate; seventeen years and five months in prison! The duc de la Vrillière is greatly to blame in the affair, but when once he has placed persons between four walls he thinks he has fulfilled the whole of his duty. He should recollect that a good memory is a necessary qualification for the situation he holds; it is indeed an imperative duty in him to think of the poor wretches he deprives of their liberty."

"And in you, too, sire," interrupted I; "and it appears to me that you have lost sight of it, in the present affair, as culpably as your minister."

"I confess it, indeed," answered Louis XV.; "but the unfortunate sufferer herself was not without a due share of blame in the matter. Her presumption had greatly irritated madame de Pompadour, who punished her as she thought fit; of course, I could not, consistently with the regard I professed for the marchioness, interfere in the execution of her vengeance."

"I do not agree with you," said I.

"Why, what else could I do?" asked Louis XV. with the most imperturbable calmness. "She had superior claims, was acknowledged as chief favorite, and I could not refuse her the sacrifice of a mere temporary caprice."

"Very well said," answered I, "and founded upon excellent principles; but surely it was not necessary to shut up the object of your caprice in a state prison, and, above all, to leave her there for such a length of time. However, the mischief is done, and all we have to think of is

to repair it. You have now, sire, a fine opportunity of displaying your royal munificence."

"You think, then," returned Louis XV., "that I am bound to make this unhappy girl some present? Well, I will; to-morrow I will send her one thousand louis."

"A thousand louis!" exclaimed I, clasping my hands. "What, as a recompense for seventeen years' imprisonment? No, no, sire; you shall not get off so easily; you must settle on her a pension of twelve thousand livres and present her with an order for one hundred thousand more as an immediate supply."

"Bless me!" ejaculated the king. "Why, all the girls in my kingdom would go to prison for such a dowry. However, she shall have the pension; but, in truth, my treasury is exhausted."

"Then, sire," returned I, "borrow of your friends."

"Come, come! let us finish this business. I will give your protégée four thousand louis."

"No, I cannot agree," answered I, "to less than five thousand."

The king promised me I should have them, and on the following day his valet Turpigny brought me the order for the pension and a bag in which I found only four thousand louis. This piece of meanness did not surprise me, but it made me shrug up my shoulders and sent me to my cabinet to take the sum deficient from my own funds. With this dowry my poor protégée soon found a suitable husband in the person of one of her cousins, for whom I procured a lucrative post under the government. These worthy people have since well repaid me by their grateful and devoted attachment for the service I was enabled to render them. One individual of their family was, however, far from resembling them either in goodness of heart or generosity of sentiment-I allude to the brother of the lady; that same brother who formerly supplied his sister with his clothes that she might visit the king unsuspected. Upon the incarceration of the father

the son succeeded him in his office of valet de chambre, and acquired considerable credit at court; yet, although in the daily habit of seeing the king, he neither by word nor deed sought to obtain the deliverance of either his parent or sister. On the contrary, he suffered the former to perish in a dungeon and allowed the latter to languish in one during more than seventeen years, and in all probability she would have ended her days without receiving the slightest mark of his recollection of his unfortunate relative. I know no trait of base selfishness more truly revolting than the one I have just related.

But this story has led me far from the subject I was previously commencing. This narrative, which I never call to mind without a feeling of pleasure, has led me away in spite of myself. Still I trust it has been sufficiently interesting to induce you to pardon the digression it has occasioned, and now I will resume the thread of my discourse.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A conspiracy—A scheme for poisoning madame du Barry—The four bottles—Letter to the duc d'Aiguillon—Advice of the ministers—Opinion of the physicians—The chancellor and lieutenant of police—Resolution of the council.

AVE you any curiosity to learn the dénouement of the story I was telling you of my anonymous correspondent? Read what follows, then, and your wishes shall be gratified—that is, if you have patience to hear a rather long story, for I cannot promise you that mine will very speedily be completed. Let me see: where did I leave off? Oh, I recollect.

I was telling you that madame de Mirepoix urged me to repair, as I was requested, to the baths of Apollo. I had a key which opened all the park gates. We entered the park, took the path which turns off to the left, and after having walked for about five minutes found ourselves opposite the person we were in search of. It was a woman from thirty to forty years of age, of diminutive stature, dressed after the fashion of the bourgeoises of the day, but still an air of good taste was evident through the simplicity of her attire. Her countenance must once have been handsome, if one might judge by the beauty of her eyes and mouth, but she was pale, withered, and already impressed with the traces of a premature old age. Her beauties, although faded, were still animated by a quick and ever-varying expression of a keen and lively wit.

Whilst I made these hasty observations the stranger saluted me, and afterwards the maréchale de Mirepoix, with an ease of manner which perfectly surprised me. Nor did she in any other instance betray the embarrassment of a person who finds herself for the first time in the presence of persons of a rank superior to her own.

"Madame," she said, addressing herself to me, "I trust you will pardon me for having given you the trouble of coming hither; I might have spared it you had your people permitted me to see you when I called at your house yesterday."

"Your invitation," replied I, "was so pressingly enforced that I confess my curiosity has been most keenly

awakened."

"I will immediately satisfy it," answered she, "but what I have to say must be told to yourself alone."

"Well, then," said the maréchale, "I will leave you for the present. I am going to admire that fine group of Girardon," and, so saying, she quitted the walk in which I was standing.

As soon as she was gone the stranger said to me: "Madame, I will explain myself without reserve or unnecessary prolixity. I beseech of you to listen attentively whilst I tell you, in the first place, that both your life and that of the king are in imminent danger."

"Heavens!" cried I, "what do I hear?"

"That which I well know to be true," answered the woman with a firm voice. "I repeat that your life and that of the king are in danger."

These words, pronounced in a low, solemn voice, froze me with terror. My limbs tottered under me, and I almost sank to the ground. The stranger assisted me to a bench, offered me her arm, and when she saw me a little recovered she continued:

"Yes, madame, a conspiracy is afoot against yourself and Louis XV. You are to be made away with out of revenge, and Louis XV. is to suffer, in the hopes of his death effecting a change in the present face of affairs."

"And who," inquired I, "are the conspirators?"

"The Jesuits and parliamentarians; these ancient rivals, equally persecuted by the royal government, have determined to make common cause against their mutual foe. The Jesuits flatter themselves that the dauphin in-

herits the kind feelings entertained by his father for their order, and the parliamentarians justly reckon upon the friendly disposition of the young prince towards the old magistracy. Both parties equally flatter themselves that a fresh reign would bring about their re-establishment, and they are impatient to accelerate so desirable an event. The conspiracy is directed by four Jesuits and the same number of the ex-members of the parliament of Paris. The remainder of the two corporations are not initiated in the secret of the enterprise. I am not able at present to give you the names of the eight conspirators, the person from whom I derive my information not having as yet confided them even to myself, but I trust ere long to obtain such a mark of confidence."

The woman ceased speaking, and I remained in a state of doubt, fear, and alarm impossible to describe. Still, one thing appeared clear to me: that information so mysteriously conveyed was not deserving of belief unless supported by more corroborating testimony. My unknown friend evidently divined all that was passing in my mind, for she observed:

"I perceive that my recital appears to you improbable. One particular which I will state may perhaps overcome your incredulity. Are you not in the habit, madame, of taking every evening eau sucrée mixed with a large proportion of orange-flower water?" I replied that I was.

"This day," continued my informant, "you will receive four bottles of orange-flower water contained in a box bearing the usual appearances of having come from the perfumer's, but it is sent by other hands, and the liquor contained in the flasks is mingled with a deadly poison—"

These last words made me tremble. "You must complete your kind offices," cried I to my visitor, "by making me acquainted with the person from whom you have derived your intelligence; that individual must be acquainted with the whole of the plot; and, believe me, I will not be unmindful of either of you."

"Stay one instant," replied the lady, without evincing the slightest emotion; "the man who was my informant is assuredly aware of the names of those concerned in the conspiracy, but he has charged me not to state who he is but upon certain conditions: a recommendation I shall most certainly attend to."

"Be assured," interrupted I, "that your demands shall be acceded to; you shall yourself fix the price of your entire disclosure of every fact connected with the business."

"It will not be an exorbitant one," replied the lady; "merely six hundred thousand francs, to be equally divided between the friend you desire to know and myself; for this sum, which is not a very large one, you may command the services of both of us. One word more, madame, and I am gone. Observe a strict silence upon all I have told you; or, if you must have a counsellor in such perilous circumstances, confide merely in some tried friend, say, the duc d'Aiguillon or the chancellor, or both should you deem it necessary. But have a care how you admit a third to a participation of the affair; you could scarcely select another person without choosing one already corrupted by your enemies. It is said that they are in correspondence with even those persons immediately about the person of the king. Adieu, madame: I will see you at your own apartments the day after tomorrow, when I trust you will have ready one hundred thousand francs, on account of the six hundred thousand I have stipulated for."

So saying, she curtseyed and left me overcome with surprise. A thousand fearful ideas pressed upon my brain, and my heart sickened at the long train of gloomy images which presented themselves. I had had sufficient proofs since my elevation of the deadly hatred borne me by those whom my good fortune had rendered my enemies; yet hitherto my strongest apprehensions had never been directed to anything more terrible than being supplanted in the favor of the king or being confined in my château du

Lucienne. The horrible ideas of murder, poison, or assassination by any means had never presented themselves to me. All at once I recollected the young man in the garden of the Tuileries. His predictions of my future greatness had been accomplished. He had also announced to me fearful vicissitudes, and had threatened to appear to me when these catastrophes were about to occur. Doubtless he would keep his word. Now was the time for so doing, and I timidly glanced around as I caught the sound of a slight rustle among the branches, fully expecting to see my young prohpet, but the figure which met my eye was that of madame de Mirepoix, who, tired of waiting, had come to rejoin me.

"What!" said she, "are you alone? I did not observe your visitor leave you. Did she vanish into air?"

"Very possibly," answered I.

"So, then," replied the maréchale, "she proved a fairy or some beneficent génie, after all?"

"If she were a spirit," said I, "it certainly was not to the better sort she belonged."

"Have a care!" cried the maréchale; "I have already formed a thousand conjectures as to what this woman has been telling."

"And all your suppositions," replied I, "would fall short of the reality. Listen, my dear maréchale," added I, rising and taking her arm to proceed homewards, "I have been strictly prohibited from admitting any counsellor but the duc d'Aiguillon and the chancellor; still, I can have no reserves with you, who I know, from the regard you bear both to the king and myself, will advise me to the best of your power."

As we walked towards the château I explained to my companion the joint conspiracy of the Jesuits and ancient members of the parliament against the king's life and my own. When I had ceased speaking she replied:

"All this is very possible; despair may conduct the Jesuits and parliamentarians to the greatest extremities;

but still this mysterious woman may be nothing more than an impostor. At any rate, I am anxious to learn whether the box she described has been left at your house; if so, it will be a strong corroboration, if not a convincing proof, of the falsehood of what she asserts."

We had by this time reached the bottom of the staircase which conducted to my apartments; we ascended the stairs rapidly, and the first person I met in the anteroom was Henriette.

"Henriette," said I, "has anything been brought for me during my absence?"

"Nothing except a box of orange-flower water from Michel the perfumer's, which I presume you ordered, madame."

A glance of mutual surprise and consternation passed between the maréchale and myself. We entered my chamber, where madame de Mirepoix opened the fatal box. It contained the four bottles exactly as had been described. We regarded each other in profound silence, not daring to communicate our reflections. However, it was requisite to take some steps, and, catching up a pen, I hastily wrote the following billet to the duc d'Aiguillon:

"Monsieur le Duc—Whatever may be the affairs with which you are at present occupied, I pray of you to throw them aside and hasten to me instantly upon receipt of this. Nothing can equal in importance the subject upon which I wish to see you. I cannot now explain myself fully, but prepare for news of the most horrible description, and it refers to the safety and preservation of the most valuable life in the kingdom. I cannot delay time by writing more. I can only beseech of you not to lose one moment in obeying this summons. Adieu; fail not to come and bring me back this note."

The duke hastened to me full of terror and alarm.

"Your letter has really frightened me," said he; "what can be the matter? Surely the life of his majesty is not in danger?"

"Too truly is it," answered I; "but sit down, and you

shall know all the affair. The maréchale is already aware of the matter and need not withdraw."

The duke listened with extreme attention to the recital of my interview in the grove surrounding the baths of Apollo, as well as to the account of the discourse I had held there with the strange woman. I endeavored to relate the conversation as minutely and accurately as possible, but still the duke sought further particulars. He inquired the style of countenance, dress, manner, and tone of voice possessed by the incognita. One might have supposed, by the closeness of his questions, that he already fancied he had identified this mysterious personage. He then examined the box, which stood on the table, and remarked: "This is a very serious affair, nor can I undertake the management of it alone; it involves a too great responsibility. Spite of the lady's assertions, I feel that the fullest confidence might be placed in all the ministers. However, I will first have a conference with M. de Saint-Florentin and the chancellor, in whose presence I will send for the lieutenant of police, and the contents of these bottles shall be immediately analyzed."

The duke, without quitting me, wrote immediately to his two colleagues as well as to M. de Sartines, requesting this latter to repair to my apartment without delay. One of the ministers summoned by M. d'Aiguillon was not at that moment at Versailles, having left at an early hour in the morning for Paris. Neither he nor M. de Sartines could possibly be with us before eight o'clock in the evening; it was therefore agreed to adjourn our conference till their arrival. Meanwhile M. d'Aiguillon, the maréchale, and I remained in a state of the most cruel anxiety. The duke first blamed me for not having caused the woman to be arrested, and afterwards he confessed to the maréchale that perhaps it was better the conspiracy should be allowed time to ripen into maturity. During this time the liquid contained in the four bottles was be-

ing decomposed. M. Quesnay, first physician; Messrs. Thiebault and Varennes, visiting physicians; M. de la Martinière, counsellor of state, surgeon to his majesty, as well as Messrs. Ducor and Prost, apothecaries to his majesty, had been collected together for this purpose by the duc d'Aiguillon.

These gentlemen came to report the termination of their experiments at the very moment when the chancellor and lieutenant of police entered the room; the duc de la Vrillière had preceded them by about five minutes; the duc d'Aiguillon requested these gentlemen to be seated. The doctors Quesnay and la Martinière were introduced, and desired to make known the result of their operations. My newly arrived guests, who as yet understood nothing of what was going on, were struck with astonishment at hearing it said that the four bottles of orange-flower water contained a considerable proportion of a most active poison, of which a few drops would be sufficient to cause instantaneous death. Having thus executed their commission, the medical gentlemen bowed and retired.

M. d'Aiguillon then explained to my wondering friends the horrible affair which had occasioned their being sent for so hastily. I cannot tell you what effect this disclosure produced on M. de la Vrillière or M. de Maupeou, my whole attention being fixed upon M. de Sartines. You may suppose that a lieutenant of police, particularly one who piqued himself upon knowing everything, could not feel very much at his ease when each word that was uttered convicted him either of incapacity or negligence. His brow became contracted, he hemmed, choked, fidgeted about, and appeared as if he would have given everything in the world for liberty to justify himself, but etiquette forbade it, and he was permitted to speak only after the secretaries of state then present or if called upon by either of them.

When M. d'Aiguillon had ceased speaking the chancellor in his turn took up the conversation. M. de Maupeou was by nature cold and sarcastic, delighting in annoying any person; but on the present occasion the illnature inherent in him was still excited by the decided hatred he bore to the unfortunate M. de Sartines. He began by saving that the conspiracy was evident and was easily explained by the state of exasperation in which the Jesuits and parliamentarians now were; both orders looking for no other prospect of amendment in their condition than such as might arise from some sudden convulsion of the kingdom. He expressed his opinion of the necessity of instituting a rigorous inquiry into the conduct of these two bodies, and then, turning to M. de Sartines, whose cheek grew pale at the movement, he charged him to lay before the council all those particulars which he must necessarily possess as head of the police, either respecting the present plot or relating to any of the ancient members of parliament or the order of Jesuits.

This was a dagger to the heart of M. de Sartines, who in vain sought to frame a suitable reply, but what could he say? He did not in reality possess any of the information for which he had received credit, and after many awkward endeavors at explaining himself he was compelled frankly to confess that he knew not a word more of the conspiracy than he had just then heard.

It was now the turn of M. de la Vrillière to speak. He also would fain have attacked the unfortunate lieutenant of police, but, whether M. de Maupeou thought that his own correction had been sufficiently strong, or whether he begrudged any other person interfering with his vengeance upon his personal foe, he abruptly interrupted the tirade of M. de la Vrillière by observing that a conspiracy conducted by only eight persons might very possibly escape the eye of the police; but, furnished as it now was with so many circumstances and particulars, it was impossible that the plot should any longer defy their vigilant researches.

M. d'Aiguillon fully concurred in this observation, and

360 MEMOIRS OF JEANNE VAUBERNIER

M. de Sartines, recovered in some measure from his first alarm, promised everything they could desire, and it was finally arranged that the police should this night use every precautionary measure in Paris and that the officers of the guard should receive orders to redouble their zeal and activity in watching the château, and that when the unknown woman called again on me she should be conducted by madame de Mirepoix to the duc d'Aiguillon, who would interrogate her closely.

These measures decided on, the council broke up and I went to receive the king, who was this evening to do me the favor of taking his supper in my apartments.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Conclusion of this affair—A letter from the incognita—Her examination—Arrest of Cabert the Swiss—He dies of poison in the Bastille—Madame Lorimer is arrested and poisoned—The innocence of the Jesuits acknowledged—Madame de Mirepoix and the hundred thousand francs—Forgetfulness on the part of de Sartines—Comte Jean's visit—Madame de Mirepoix.

DE SARTINES did not sleep on his post, but his researches were fruitless, and on the following day three successive messengers came to announce to us that they had as yet made no discovery. The day passed without bringing any fresh intelligence, and our anxiety increased daily. At length arrived the period fixed for the visit of the incognita. I awaited the coming of this woman with an impatience impossible to describe. About mid-day a note was brought me. I instantly recognized the writing as that of my mysterious friend, and, hastily breaking the seal, read as follows:

"Madame—I must entreat your pardon for breaking the appointment for to-day; imperative duties still detain me in Paris. "Since our last interview I have been unceasingly occupied in endeavoring to discover the names of the eight persons of whom I spoke to you, and I am sorry to say I have but partially succeeded. The person who has hitherto furnished me with my

ceeded. The person who has hitherto furnished me with my information obstinately refuses to state who are the parliamentarians concerned in the conspiracy. I am, however, enabled to forward you the names of the four Jesuits, with some few par-

ticulars relating to these worthy fathers.

"The Jesuits in question are Messrs. Corbin, Berthier, Cerulti, and Dumas, the first of whom was employed in the education of the dauphin; the second and the third are sufficiently known; as for the fourth, he is a bold and enterprising Parisian, capable of conceiving and executing the most daring schemes. Whilst the order remained in possession of power he had no opportunity of displaying his extraordinary talents, and consequently he ob-

tained but a trifling reputation; but since its banishment he has become its firmest support and principal hope. All the treasures of the brotherhood are at his disposal, and I learn that the day before yesterday he received a considerable sum from Lyons.

"This intrepid and daring spirit is the very soul of the conspiracy; he it is who conceived the plan and set the whole machine in action. It would be effectually extinguished could we but once secure him, but this is by no means an easy task. He has no fixed abode, never sleeps two nights following in the same home. One day he may be found in one part of Paris and the next at the very opposite corner. He changes his manner of dress as frequently as he does his abodes.

"I shall have the honor of seeing you to-morrow or the day after at furthest. Meanwhile lay aside all uneasiness for his majesty's safety; I pledge you my word he is for the present in perfect security. The execution of the plot is still deferred for the want of a Damiens sufficiently sanguinary to undertake the task.

"Deign, madame, to accept the assurance of my sincere devotion, and believe that I will neglect no opportunity of affording you proofs of it.

"Yours, madame, etc., etc."

I immediately communicated this letter to the duc d'Aiguillon, who convoked a fresh meeting of the persons who had been present on the preceding day. It was at first deliberated whether or not to arrest the whole body of Jesuits then in Paris, but this, although the advice of M. d'Aiguillon, was by no means approved of by the chancellor. M. de Sartines and M. de la Vrillière were for carrying the idea into execution, but the objections of M. de Maupeou were too powerful to be overruled, and the scheme was for the present abandoned. The chancellor maintained that the other conspirators, warned of their own danger by the seizure of their friends, would either escape the vengeance of the laws by flight or by close confinement in their houses. He greatly dreaded, as it was, that his foes, the parliamentarians, would avoid the punishment he longed to inflict on them. Indeed, in his estimation it seemed as if every measure would be anticipated so long as the woman who seemed so intimately acquainted with their design was at liberty, and this last opinion was unanimously concurred in.

All the delays greatly irritated me and rendered my impatience to witness the termination of the affair greater than it had ever been. The stranger had promised to make her appearance on the following day; it passed away, however, without my hearing anything of her. On the day following she came. I immediately sent to apprise M. d'Aiguillon, who, with M. de la Vrillière and the chancellor, entered my apartments ere the lady had had time to commence the subject upon which she was there to speak. This unexpected appearance did not seem to disconcert her in the least, nor did her sang froid and ordinary assurance in any degree fail her. She reproached me for having intrusted the secret to so many persons, but her reproof was uttered without bitterness and merely as if she feared lest my indiscretion might compromise our safety. She was overwhelmed with questions, and the chancellor interrogated her with the keenest curiosity; but to all the inquiries put to her she replied with a readiness and candor which surprised the whole party. She was desired to give the names of those engaged in the conspiracy as well as of him who first informed her of it. She answered that her own name was Lorimer, that she was a widow living upon her own property. As for the man, her informant, he was a Swiss named Cabert, of about thirty years of age, and had long been her intimate friend; however, the embarrassed tone with which she pronounced these last words left room for the suspicion that he had been something dearer to her than a friend. She was then urged to give up the names of the four parliamentarians, but she protested that she had not yet been able to prevail on Cabert to confide them to her, that she was compelled to use the utmost circumspection in her attempts at discovering the facts already disclosed, but flattered herself she should yet succeed in gaining a full and unreserved disclosure. M. de

Maupeou encouraged her by every possible argument to neglect no means of arriving at so important a discovery.

The examination over and the hundred thousand francs she had demanded given to her, she retired, but followed at a distance by a number of spies who were commissioned to watch her slightest movement.

Cabert, the Swiss, was arrested in a furnished lodging he occupied in the rue Saint-Roch and sent without delay to Versailles, where, as before, M. d'Aiguillon with his two colleagues waited in my study to receive and question the prisoner. Cabert was a young and handsome man, whose countenance bore evident marks of a dissolute and profligate life. He confessed without any difficulty that his only means of gaining a livelihood were derived from the generosity of a woman friend, but when he was pressed upon the subject of the conspiracy he no longer replied with the same candor, but merely answered in short and impatient negatives the many questions put to him, accompanied with fervent protestations of innocence, adding that implacable enemies had fabricated the whole story only that they might have an opportunity of wreaking their vengeance by implicating him in it.

"Accuse not your enemies!" cried I, for the first time mingling in the conversation, "but rather blame your benefactress; it is madame Lorimer who has denounced you, and, far from intending to harm you by so doing, she purposes dividing with you the hundred thousand livres which are to reward her disclosures."

I easily found by the frowning looks directed towards me by the three gentlemen present that I had been guilty of great imprudence in saying so much, but Cabert, wringing his hands, uttered with the most despairing accent:

"I am lost! and most horribly has the unfortunate woman avenged herself!"

"What would you insinuate?"

"That I am the victim of an enraged woman," replied he.

He afterwards explained that he had been the lover of madame Lorimer, but had become wearied of her and left her in consequence; that she had violently resented this conduct, and, after having in vain sought to move him by prayers and supplications, had tried the most horrible threats and menaces. "I ought not indeed," continued he, "to have despised these threats, for well I knew the fiendlike malice of the wretched creature, and dearly do I pay for my imprudence by falling into the pit she has dug for me."

In vain we endeavored to induce him to hold a different language. He persisted with determined obstinacy in his first statement, continually protesting his own innocence and loading the author of his woes with bitter imprecations. It was deemed impossible to allow this man to go at large; accordingly M. de la Vrillière issued a lettre de cachet which sent him that night to seek a lodging in the Bastille. It was afterwards deemed advisable to put him to the torture, but the agonies of the rack wrung from him no deviation from or contradiction of what he had previously alleged.

The affair had now become mysterious and inexplicable. However, a speedy termination was most imperatively called for. If it were permitted to become generally known it could not fail of reaching the ears of the king, whose health was daily declining, and M. de Quesnay had assured us that in his present languid state the shock produced by news so alarming might cause his instantaneous death.

Whilst we remained in uncertainty as to our mode of proceeding in the business Cabert, the Swiss, three days after his admission into the Bastille, expired in the most violent convulsions. His body was opened, but no trace of poison could be discovered; our suspicions were, however, awakened, and what followed confirmed them.

Madame Lorimer was arrested. She protested that she had been actuated by no feelings of enmity against her

unfortunate lover, whom she had certainly reproached for having expended the money she furnished him with in the society of other women, and to the anger which arose between herself and Cabert on the occasion could she alone ascribe his infamous calumnies respecting her; that for her own part she had never ceased to love him, and, as far as she knew, that feeling was reciprocal; and in betraying the conspiracy her principal desire, next to the anxious hope of preserving the king, was to make the fortune of Cabert. She was confined in the Bastille, but she did not long remain within its walls, for at the end of a fortnight she died of an inflammatory disease. Her death was marked by no convulsions, but the traces of poison were evident.

These two violent deaths occurring so immediately one after another (as not the slightest doubt existed that Cabert had likewise died of poison) threw the ministers into a sad state of perplexity. But to whom could they impute the double crime unless to some accomplice who dreaded what the unhappy prisoners might be tempted to reveal? Yet the conduct of the Jesuitical priests stated by madame Lorimer to be the principal ringleaders in the plot, although exposed to the most rigorous scrutiny, offered not the slightest grounds for suspicion. Neither did their letters (all intercepted at various post-houses) give any indication of a treasonable correspondence.

M. de Sartines caused the private papers of the suspected parties to be opened during their owners' absence, without discovering anything which could compromise their character. I am speaking, however, of the fathers Corbin, Berthier, and Cerulti, for all our efforts could not trace father Dumas throughout all Paris. Nor was the innocence of the parliamentarians less evident: they vented their hatred against the ministry, and particularly against M. de Maupeou, in pamphlets, couplets, and epigrams, both in French and Latin, but they had no idea of conspiracies or plots.

And thus terminated an affair which had caused so much alarm, and which continued for a considerable period to engage the attention of ministers. How was the mystery to be cleared up? The poisoned orangeflower water and the sudden deaths of the two prisoners were facts difficult to reconcile with the no less undeniable innocence of the three accused Jesuits. The whole business was to me an incomprehensible mass of confusion, in which incidents the most horrible were mingled. At last we agreed that the best and only thing to be done was to consign the affair to oblivion, but there were circumstances which did not so easily depart from the recollection of my excellent friend the maréchale de Mirepoix. "My dear soul," said she to me one day, "have you ever inquired what became of the hundred thousand livres given to madame Lorimer? She had no time to employ them in any way before her imprisonment in the Bastille. You ought to inquire into what hands they have fallen."

I fully comprehended the drift of this question, which I put to M. de Sartines the first time I saw him.

"Bless me!" exclaimed he, "you remind me that these hundred thousand livres have been lying in a drawer in my office. But I have such a terrible memory!"

"Happily," replied I, "I have a friend whose memory is as good as yours seems defective upon such occasions. It will not be wise to permit such a sum to remain uselessly in your office; at the same time, I need not point out that you, by your conduct in the late affair, have by no means earned a right to them."

He attempted to justify himself, but, interrupting him, I exclaimed: "My good friend, you have set up a reputation of your own creating and inventing, and well it is you took the office upon yourself, for no one else would have done it for you; but you perceive how frail have been its foundations, for the moment you are compelled to stand upon your own resources you faint and are easily overcome."

He endeavored to make a joke of the affair, but indeed it seemed to accord as ill with his natural inclination as did the restitution of the hundred thousand livres. However, he brought them to me the following day, and as I was expecting the arrival of madame de Mirepoix I placed them in a porcelain vase which stood upon my chimney-piece. Unfortunately for the maréchale, comte Jean presented himself before she did. He came to inform me that my husband (of whose quitting Toulouse I had forgotten to tell you) had again arrived in Paris. I did not disguise the vexation which this piece of intelligence excited in me.

"And wherefore has comte Guillaume returned to Paris?" inquired I, angrily.

"Because he is afraid."

"Afraid of what?" asked I.

"Of being murdered," answered comte Jean. "It is a most horrible and authentic story. Imagine to yourself the dangers of his situation: some brigands who have a design on his life have written him an anonymous billet in which they protest they will certainly murder him unless he deposits fifty thousand livres in a certain place. You may suppose his terror; money he had none, neither was his credit sufficiently good to enable him to borrow any. As a last and only chance he threw himself into a carriage and hastened tremblingly to implore your assistance."

"And I am quite certain you will not withhold yours from him," answered I.

"You are perfectly right," cried he; "but unfortunately just now I have not a single crown I can call my own, so that it rests with you alone, my dearest sister, to save the life of this hapless comte du Barry."

"I am extremely distressed, my dear brother-in-law," replied I, "that I am just as poor and as unable to afford the necessary aid as yourself. My purse is quite empty."

"Faith, my dear sister-in-law, I am not surprised at

that if you convert a china vase into a receptacle for your banknotes."

Saying this he drew a bundle of notes from the hidingplace in which I had deposited them. "Do you know," continued comte Jean, "I really think we shall find money enough here." He began to count them, and when he had finished he said: "My dear sister, neither your husband nor myself wishes to importune you or put you to any inconvenience; therefore you shall merely oblige him with the loan of these fifty thousand livres to extricate him from his present peril. They shall be faithfully and quickly restored to you, and a note of hand given you for that purpose if you desire it." So saying, he divided the money into two parts, replaced one in the vase and pocketed the other.

I was very indignant at the cool impudence with which this was done, and my patience had wellnigh forsaken me; however, I restrained myself, and I was happy enough that I could so far conquer myself. My reproaches would not have induced comte Jean to give me back my money, and would only have roused his violence, which, when once excited, found vent in language so vehement and energetic that I did not desire to hear any more of it than I could help. At these moments he selected not the politest expressions, but those which were the strongest, and, besides, such was the ungovernable nature of comte Jean's temper that, once roused, he would have treated the king himself with as little consideration as he did me. Still, he never deliberately insulted me, nor did he compose those insulting verses respecting me which were printed as his in "Les Anecdotes sur Madame du Barry." This would have been an indignity I would quickly have caused him to repent having offered.

"Well," inquired I, "are you very glad to see your brother in Paris?"

"No, 'pon my soul!" returned he; "but since he is here

we must do the best we can with him. He was very anxious to see his sister-in-law and niece. He says the former is ugly as sin and the latter almost as handsome as you."

"Very gallant," replied I; "but tell me, comte Jean, does this elegant compliment proceed from my husband or

yourself?"

We were just then interrupted by the arrival of the maréchale, and comte Jean retired.

"Well, my dear," she began, "have you seen M. de Sartines, and did you speak to him respecting those hundred thousand livres?"

"Oh, yes," replied I, "he gave them back to me; but I have already had half of them stolen from me."

"By comte Jean, I'll engage!" cried she. "Upon my word, that man is a perfect spendthrift, a prodigal, who, if you do not take great care, will certainly ruin you. And what will you do with the remaining fifty thousand livres, my dear friend? Where will you place them?"

"In your hands, my dear maréchale; 'tis his majesty's command."

"To that command," answered she, "I must perforce submit," and, taking the bundle of notes, she continued: "Assure his majesty that it will ever be my greatest pride and pleasure to obey his slightest wish. My respect for his orders can be equalled only by my tender friendship for her who is the bearer of the royal mandate." Then, deliberately putting the money in her pocket, she exclaimed, "You must own that comte Jean is a great rogue."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Alarms—Comte Jean endeavors to direct the king's ideas—A supper at Trianon—Table talk—The king is seized with illness—His conversation—The joiner's daughter and the small-pox—Despair of the countess—Conduct of la Martinière the surgeon.

HAD occasionally some unaccountable whims and caprices. Among other follies I took it into my head to become jealous of the duchesse de Cossé, under the idea that the duke would return to her and that I should no longer possess his affections. Now, the cause of this extravagant conduct was the firmness with which madame de Cossé refused all overtures to visit me, and I had really become so spoiled and petted that I could not understand the reasonableness of the duchesse de Cossé refusing to sanction her rival by her presence.

You may perceive that I had not carried my heroic projects with regard to madame de Cossé into execution. Upon these occasions the person most to be pitied was the duke, whom I made answerable for the dignified and virtuous conduct of his wife. My injustice drove him nearly to despair, and he used every kind and sensible argument to convince me of my error, as if it had been possible for one so headstrong and misguided as I to listen to or comprehend the language of reason. I replied to his tender and beseeching epistles by every cutting and mortifying remark; in a word, all common-sense appeared to have forsaken me. Our quarrel was strongly suspected by part of the court, but the extreme prudence and forbearance of M. de Cossé prevented their suppositions from ever obtaining any confirmation. But this was not the only subject I had for annoyance. On the one hand, my emissaries informed me that the king still continued to visit the baroness de New-k, although with every appearance of caution and mystery, by the assistance and connivance of the duc de Duras, who had given me his solemn promise never again to meddle with the affair. The fact was, the king could not be satisfied without a continual variety, and his passion, which ultimately destroyed him, appeared to have come on only as he advanced in years.

All these things created in my mind an extreme agitation and an alarm, and, improbable as the thing appeared even to myself, there were moments when I trembled lest I should be supplanted either by the baroness or some fresh object of the king's caprice; and again a cold dread stole over me when I anticipated the probability of the health of Louis XV. falling a sacrifice to the irregularity of his life. It was well known throughout the château that la Martinière, the king's surgeon, had strongly recommended a very temperate course of life as essentially necessary to recruit his constitution, wasted by so many excesses, and had even gone so far as to recommend his no longer having a mistress; this the courtiers construed into a prohibition against his possessing a friend of any other sex than his own. For my own part I experienced very slight apprehensions of being dismissed, for I well knew that Louis XV, reckoned too much on my society to permit my leaving the court, and if one, the more tender, part of our union were dissolved, etiquette could no longer object to my presence. Still, the advice of la Martinière was far from giving me a reason for congratulation; but these minor grievances were soon to be swallowed up in one fatal catastrophe by which the honors and pleasures of Versailles were forever torn from me.

One day I learned that his majesty had fallen desperately in love with a young orphan of high birth; that to an extraordinary share of beauty Julie (for that was the name of my rival) united the most insatiate ambition; her aims were directed to reducing the king into a state of

the most absolute bondage, "and he," said my informant, "bids fair to become all that the designing girl would have him."

Julie feigned the most violent love for her royal admirer; nay, she did not hesitate to carry her language and caresses far beyond the strict rules of decency; her manners were those of one accustomed to the most polished society, whilst her expressions were singularly adapted to please one who, like the king, had a peculiar relish for everything that was indecent or incorrect. His majesty either visited her daily or sent for her to the château. I heard likewise from M. d'Aiguillon that the king had recently given orders that the three uncles and two brothers of Julie should be raised by rapid promotion to the highest military rank; at the same time the grand almoner informed me he had received his majesty's express command to appoint a cousin of the young lady to the first vacant bishopric.

These various reports threw me into a train of painful and uneasy reflections. Louis XV. had never before bestowed such marks of favor upon any young girl, and the intrigue had attained this height with the most inconceivable rapidity. Chamilly interrupted my meditations by presenting himself with an account of his having been commissioned by his majesty to cause a most splendid suit of diamonds to be prepared for mademoiselle Julie, the king not considering any jewels of Paris worthy her acceptance. By way of a finish to all this I learned that two ladies, one of whom was a duchess, had openly boasted at Versailles of their relationship to Julie. was a more decided corroborative than all the rest. Courtiers of either sex are skilful judges of the shiftings of the wind of court favor, and I deemed it high time to summon my brother-in-law to my assistance, as well as to urge him to exert his utmost energies to support my tottering power.

My communication tormented comte Jean as much as

it did me. He proposed several means of combating this rising inclination on the part of Louis XV. I assented to whatever he suggested, and we set to work with an eagerness increased on my part by a species of gloomy presentiment which subsequent events but too fatally confirmed. The maréchale de Mirepoix, who, from being on good terms with every person, was sure to be aware of all that was going on, spoke to me also of this rival who was springing up in obscurity and retirement, and it was from the same source I learned what I have told you of the two ladies of the court. She advised me not to abandon myself to a blind confidence, and this opinion was strengthened when I related all I had gathered upon the subject.

"You may justly apprehend," said she, "that Julie will instill some of her bold and fearless nature into the king, and, should she presume to put herself in competition with you, victory would in all probability incline to the side of the last comer," and I felt but too truly that the maréchale spoke with truth.

A few days after this, the king being alone with me, comte Jean entered. After the usual salutations he exclaimed, "I have just seen a most lovely creature."

"Who is she?" inquired his majesty, hastily.

"No high-born dame," answered comte Jean, "but the daughter of a cabinet-maker at Versailles; I think I never beheld such matchless beauty."

"Always excepting present company," replied the king.
"Assuredly," rejoined my brother-in-law. "But, sire,
the beauteous object of whom I speak is a nymph in
grace, a sylph in airy lightness, and an angel in feature."

"Comte Jean seems deeply smitten indeed, madame,"

exclaimed Louis XV., turning towards me.

"Not I, indeed!" replied my brother-in-law; "my love-making days are over."

"Oh! oh!" cried the king, smiling, "fructus belli."

"What does your majesty say?" inquired I.

"Nay, let the count explain!" cried Louis XV.

"The king observed, my dear sister," answered comte Jean, "that ladies—but, in fact, I can neither explain the observation nor was it intended for you; so let it rest."

The king continued for some time to jest with comte Jean upon his supposed passion for the fair daughter of the cabinet-maker, and, whilst affecting the utmost indifference, he took every pains to obtain the fullest particulars as to where this peerless beauty might be found.

When my brother-in-law and myself were alone he said to me: "I played my part famously, did I not? How eagerly the bait was swallowed!"

"Explain yourself," said I.

"My good sister, what I have said respecting this perfection of loveliness is no fiction, neither have I at all exaggerated either her perfections or her beauty, and I trust by her aid we shall obliterate from the king's mind every recollection of the new siren."

"Heaven grant it!" exclaimed I.

"My dear sister," replied comte Jean, "Heaven has nothing to do with such things."

Alas! he was mistaken, and Providence employed the present occasion only as a means of causing us to be precipitated into the very abyss of ruin we had dug for others. On the following morning Chamilly came to me to inquire whether it was my pleasure that the present scheme should be carried into execution.

"Yes! yes!" answered I, eagerly, "by all means; the more we direct the inclinations of the king for the present, the better for him and for us likewise."

Armed with my consent, Chamilly despatched to the unhappy girl a woman whose skill in such delicate commissions had never been known to fail. Not that in the present instance any great bribes were requisite, but it was necessary to employ some agent whose specious reasoning and oily tongue should have power to vanquish the virtuous reluctance of the victim herself, as well as to

obtain a promise of strict silence from her family. They were soon induced to listen to their artful temptress, and the daughter, dazzled by the glittering prospect held out to her, was induced to accompany madame back to Trianon, where the king was to sup in company with the ducs d'Aiguillon and de Richelieu, the prince de Soubise, the ducs de Cossé, de Duras, and de Noailles, mesdames de Mirepoix, de Forcalquier, de Flaracourt, and myself; my brother-in-law and Chon were also of the party, although not among the number of those who sat down to supper. Their presence was merely to keep up my spirits and with a view to divert me from dwelling on the presumed infidelity of the king.

We had promised ourselves a most delightful evening, and had all come with the expectation of finding considerable amusement in watching the countenances and conduct of those who were not aware of the real state of the game, whilst such as were admitted into my entire confidence were sanguine in their hopes and expectations of employing the simple beauty of the maiden of Versailles to crush the aspiring views of my haughty rival, Julie. This was, indeed, the point at which I aimed, and my further intention was to request the king to portion off mademoiselle Julie so that she might be forever removed from again crossing my path.

Meanwhile, by way of passing the tedious hours, I went to satisfy my curiosity respecting those charms of which comte Jean had spoken so highly. I found the object of so many conjectures possessed of an uncommon share of beauty, set off on the present occasion by every aid that a splendid and elaborate toilette could impart; her features were perfect, her form tall and symmetrical, her hair was in the richest style of luxuriance; but by way of drawback to so many advantages both her hands and feet were large and coarse. I had expected to have found her timid yet exulting, but she seemed languid and dejected even to indisposition. I attributed the lassitude and heavi-

ness which hung over her to some natural regrets for sacrificing some youthful passion at the shrine of ambition. but I was far from guessing the truth. Had I but suspected the real cause! But I contented myself with a silent scrutiny, and did not (as I should have done) question her on the subject, but passed on to the saloon, where the guests were already assembled. The evening passed away most delightfully. The maréchale de Mirepoix excelled herself in keeping up a continual flow of lively conversation. Never had messieurs de Cossé and de Richelieu appeared to equal advantage. The king laughed heartily at the many humorous tales told, and his gayety was the more excited from his believing that I was in utter ignorance of his infidelity. The champagne was passed freely around the table, till all was one burst of hilarious mirth. A thousand different topics were started and dismissed only to give way to fresh subjects more piquant than the preceding.

We were still at table when the clock struck two hours past midnight.

"Bless me! so late?" inquired the king.

"Indeed, sire," replied the maréchale de Mirepoix, "your agreeable society drives all recollection of time away."

"Then 'tis but fit I should furnish you all with memory enough to recollect what is necessary for your own health. Come, my friends, morning will soon call us to our different cares, so away to your pillows."

So saying, the king bade us a friendly farewell and retired with the ducs de Duras and de Noailles. We remained after his majesty, and, retiring into the great saloon, threw ourselves without any ceremony upon the different couches and ottomans.

"For my own part," said the prince de Soubise, "I shall not think of separating from so agreeable a party till daylight warns me hence."

"The first beams of morn will soon shine through these windows," replied M. d'Aiguillon.

"We can already perceive the brightest rays of Aurora reflected in the sparkling eyes around us!" exclaimed M. de Cossé.

"A truce with your gallantry, gentlemen!" replied madame de Mirepoix; "at my age I can only believe myself capable of reflecting the last rays of the setting sun."

"Hush!" interrupted madame de Forcalquier, "you forget we are at Versailles, where age is never thought of, but where, like our gracious sovereign, all are young."

"Come, ladies," said madame de Flaracourt, "let us retire; I for one plead guilty of being in need of repose."

"No. no!" replied the duc de Richelieu; "let us employ the remaining hours in pleasing and social converse," and with a tremulous voice he began that charming trio in "Selina and Azor," "Veillons mes sœurs." We joined chorus with him, and the echoes of the palace of Louis XV. resounded with the mirthful strain. This burst of noisy mirth did not last long, and we relapsed into increased taciturnity spite of our endeavors to keep up a general conversation. We were all fatigued, though none but madame de Flaracourt would confess the fact. Tired nature called loudly for repose, and we were each compelled to seek it in the different apartments assigned us. The duc d'Aiguillon alone was compelled by the duties of his office to return to Versailles.

Upon entering my chamber I found my brother-in-law there in the most violent fit of ill humor that the king (who was in fact ignorant of his being at Trianon) had not invited him to supper. As I have before told you, comte Jean was no favorite with his majesty, and as I had displayed no wish for his company Louis XV. had gladly profited by my indifference to omit him upon the present occasion. I endeavored to justify the king, without succeeding, however, in appeasing comte Jean, who consigned us all to the care and company of a certain old gentleman whose territory is supposed to lie beneath "the round globe which we inhabit."

"I have to thank you," replied I, "for a very flattering mode of saying 'good night."

"Perhaps," answered comte Jean, roughly, "you would prefer—"

"Nothing from your lips, if you please, my polite brother!" cried I, interrupting him; "nothing you will say in your present humor can be at all to my taste."

Chon interfered between us and effected a reconciliation, which I was the more willing to listen to that I might enjoy that sleep my weary eyelids craved. Scarcely was my head on my pillow than I fell into a profound sleep. Could I but have anticipated to what I should awake! It was eleven o'clock on the following morning when an immense noise of some person entering my chamber aroused me from the sweet slumbers I was still buried in. Vexed at the disturbance, I inquired in a peevish tone, "Who is there?"

"'Tis I, my sister," replied Chon. "M. Chamilly is here, anxious to speak with you upon a matter of great importance."

Chamilly, who was close behind mademoiselle du Barry, begged to be admitted.

"What is the matter, Chamilly?" cried I, "and what do you want? Is mademoiselle Julie to set off into the country immediately?"

"Alas! madame," replied Chamilly, "his majesty is extremely ill."

These words completely awakened me, and, raising myself on my arm, I eagerly repeated:

"Ill! Of what does he complain?"

"Of general and universal pain and suffering," replied Chamilly.

"And the woman who was here last night, how is she?"

"Nearly as bad, madame; she arose this morning complaining of illness and languor, which increased so rapidly that she was compelled to be carried to one of the nearest beds, where she now is." All this tormented me to the greatest degree, and I dismissed Chamilly for the purpose of rising, although I had no distinct idea of what it would be most desirable to say or do. My sister-in-law, with more self-possession, suggested the propriety of summoning Bordeu, my physician: a proposal which I at once concurred in, more especially when she informed me that la Martinière was already sent for and hourly expected.

"I trust," said I, "that Bouvart knows nothing of this, for I neither approve of him as a man or a doctor."

The fact was I should have trembled for my own power had both Bouvart and la Martinière got the king into their hands. With la Martinière I knew very well I was no favorite; yet it was impossible to prevent his attendance; the king would never have fancied a prescription in which he did not concur.

Meanwhile I proceeded with my toilette as rapidly as possible that I might, by visiting the king, satisfy myself of the nature of his malady. Ere I had finished dressing. my brother-in-law, who had likewise been aroused by the mention of his majesty's illness, entered my chamber with a gloomy look; he already saw the greatness of the danger which threatened us; he had entirely forgotten our quarrel of the preceding evening, but his temper was by no means improved by the present state of things. We had no need of explaining ourselves by words, and he continued walking up and down the room with his arms folded and his eyes fixed on the floor, till we were joined by the maréchale de Mirepoix and the comtesse de Forcalquier. Madame de Flaracourt had taken her departure at an early hour, either ignorant of what had occurred or with the intention of being prepared for whatever might happen.

As yet it was but little in the power of any person to predict the coming blow. "The king is ill," said each of us as we met. "The king is ill," was the morning salutation of the ducs de Richelieu, de Noailles, de Duras, and de Cossé. The prince de Soubise had followed the example of madame de Flaracourt and had quitted Trianon. It seemed as if the hour for defections had already arrived. A summons now arrived from his majesty, who wished to see me. I lost not a moment in repairing to his apartment, where I found him in bed, apparently in much pain and uneasiness. He received me tenderly, took my hands in his and kissed them; then exclaimed:

"I feel more indisposed than I can describe; a weight seems pressing on my chest, and universal languor appears to chain my faculties both of body and mind. I should like to see la Martinière."

"And would you also wish the advice of Bordeu?"

"Yes," said he, "let both come; they are both clever men, and I have full confidence in their skill. But do you imagine that my present illness will be of a serious nature?"

"By no means, sire," returned I; "merely temporary, I trust and believe."

"Perhaps I took more wine than agreed with me last evening. But where is the maréchale?"

"In my chamber with madame de Forcalquier."

"And the prince de Soubise?"

"He has taken flight," replied I, laughing.

"I suppose so," returned Louis XV.; "he could not bear a long absence from Paris; company he must have."

"In that respect he resembles you, sire, for you generally consider company as a necessary good."

He smiled, and then closing his eyes remained for some minutes silent and motionless. After a while he said:

"My head is very heavy, so farewell, my sweet friend; I will endeavor to get some sleep."

"Sleep, sire!" said I, "and may it prove as healthful and refreshing as I pray it may."

So saying, I glided out of the room and returned to my friends. I found madame de Mirepoix and the duc de Cossé waiting for me in the anteroom. "How is the king?" inquired they both in a breath.

"Better than I expected," I replied, "but he is desirous of sleeping."

"So much the worse," observed the duc de Cossé; "I should have thought better of his case had he been more wakeful."

"Are you aware of the most imperative step for you to take?" inquired the maréchale de Mirepoix.

"No," said I. "What is it?"

"To keep his majesty at Trianon," replied she. "It will be far better for you that the present illness should take its course at Trianon rather than at Versailles."

"I second that advice," cried the duc de Richelieu, who just then entered the room; "yes, yes, as madame de Mirepoix wisely observes, this is the place for the king to be ill in."

"But," exclaimed I, "must we not be guided by the physicians' advice?"

"Do you make sure of Bordeu," said the duke, "and I will speak to la Martinière."

M. de Cossé took me aside and assured me that I might rely upon him in life or death. When we had conversed together for some minutes I besought of him to leave the place as early as possible. "Take madame de Forcalquier with you," said I; "your presence just now at Trianon would be too much commented upon."

He made some difficulties in obeying me, but I insisted and he went. After his departure the duc de Richelieu, the maréchale, and I walked together in the garden. Our walk was so directed that we could see through the colonnade every person who arrived up the avenue. We spoke but little, and an indescribable feeling of solemnity was mingled with the few words which passed, when all at once our attention was attracted by the sight of comte Jean, who rushed towards me in a state of frenzy.

"Accursed day!" cried he, stopping, "that wretched girl from Versailles has brought smallpox with ker."

At this fatal news I heaved a deep sigh and fainted. I was carried under the portico, and the poor maréchale, scarcely more in her senses than myself, stood over me weeping like a child, while every endeavor was being made to restore me to life. Bordeu, who chanced to be at Versailles, arrived, and, supposing it was on my account he had been summoned, hastened to my assistance. The duc de Richelieu and comte Jean informed him of all that had passed, upon which he requested to see the unfortunate woman immediately. While he was conducted thither I remained alone with the maréchale and Henriette, who had come to Trianon with my suite. My first impulse upon regaining the use of my senses was to throw myself in the arms of the maréchale.

"What will become of me!" exclaimed I, weeping; "if the king should take this fatal malady he will never survive it."

"Let us hope for the best," answered madame de Mirepoix. "It would be encouraging grief to believe a misfortune which we have at present no reason to suspect."

Comte Jean now rejoined us, accompanied by Bordeu and the duc de Richelieu. Their countenances were gloomy and dejected. The miserable victim of ambition had the symptoms of the most malignant sort of smallpox. This was a finishing stroke to my previous alarms. However, comte Jean whispered in my ear, "Bordeu will arrange that the king shall remain here."

This assurance restored me to something like composure, but these hopes were speedily dissipated by the arrival of la Martinière.

"What is the matter?" inquired he. "Is the king very ill?"

"That remains for you to decide," replied the duc de Richelieu; "but, however it may be, madame du Barry entreats of you not to think of removing the king to Versailles."

"And why so?" asked la Martinière, with his accus-

tomed abruptness. "His majesty would be much better there than here."

"He can nowhere be better than at Trianon, monsieur," said I.

"That, madame," answered la Martinière, "is the only point upon which you must excuse my consulting you, unless, indeed, you are armed with a physician's diploma."

"Monsieur la Martinière," cried the duc de Richelieu, "you might employ more gentle language when speaking

to a lady."

"Was I sent for hither," inquired the angry physician, "to go through a course of politeness?"

For my own part I felt the utmost dread, I scarcely knew of what. Bordeu, seeing my consternation, hastened to interfere by saying:

"At any rate, monsieur la Martinière, you will not alarm the king needlessly."

"Nor lull him into a false security," answered the determined la Martinière. "But what is his malady? Have you seen him, doctor Bordeu?"

"Not vet."

"Then why do we linger here? Your servant, ladies and gentlemen."

The medical men then departed, accompanied by the duc de Richelieu.

CHAPTER XL.

La Martinière causes the king to be removed to Versailles—The young prophet appears again to madame du Barry—Prediction respecting cardinal de Richelieu—The joiner's daughter requests to see madame du Barry—Madame de Mirepoix and the fifty thousand francs—A soirée in the salon of madame du Barry.

E continued for some minutes silently gazing on the retreating figures of la Martinière and his companions.

"Come," said the maréchale, "let us return to the house," saying which she supported herself by the arm of comte Jean, whilst I mechanically followed her example, and sadly and sorrowfully we bent our steps beneath the splendid colonnade which formed the entrance to the mansion.

When I reached my chamber I found mademoiselle du Barry there, still ignorant of the alarming news I had just learned. She earnestly pressed me to return to bed, but this I refused, for my burning anxiety to learn every particular relative to the king would have prevented my sleeping. How different was the style of our present conversation to that of the preceding evening! No sound of gayety was heard; hushed alike were the witty repartee and the approving laugh which followed it. Now we spoke but by fits and starts, with eye and ear on the watch to catch the slightest sound, whilst the most trifling noise or the opening of a door made us start with trepidation and alarm. The time appeared to drag on to an interminable length,

At last the duc de Richelieu made his appearance.

"Well, my friends," said he, "the king is to be removed to Versailles, spite of your wishes, madame, spite of his own royal inclination, and against mine likewise. La Martinière has thundered forth his edict, and poor Bor-

D. B.—25. (385)

deu opposed him in vain. His majesty, who expresses a wish to remain here, stated his pleasure to la Martinière.

"'Sire,' answered the obstinate physician, 'it cannot be. You are too ill to be permitted to take your choice in the matter, and to the château at Versailles you must be removed.'

"'Your words imply my being dangerously indis-

posed?' said the king, inquiringly.

"'Your majesty is sufficiently ill to justify every precaution and to require our best care. You must return to the château; Trianon is not healthy; you will be much better at Versailles.'

"'Upon my word, doctor,' replied the king, 'your words are far from consoling. There must be danger, then, in

my present sickness?'

"There would be considerable danger were you to remain here, whilst it is very probable you may avoid any chance of it by following my directions with regard to an immediate removal to Versailles."

"'I feel but little disposed for the journey,' said his

majesty.

"'Still, your majesty must be removed; there is an absolute necessity for it, and I take all the responsibility upon myself.'

"'What do you think of this determination, Bordeu?"

"'I think, sire, that you may be permitted to please yourself.'

"'You hear that, la Martinière?"

"'Yes, sire, and your majesty heard my opinion likewise.' Then, turning towards Bordeu: 'Sir,' exclaimed he, 'I call upon you in my capacity of head physician to the king to state your opinion in writing, and to abide by the consequences of it: you who are not one of his majesty's physicians.'

"At this direct appeal your doctor, driven to extremities, adopted either the wise or cowardly resolution of maintaining a strict silence. The king, who was await-

ing his reply with much impatience, perceiving his reluctance to speak, turned towards the duc de Duras, who was in attendance upon him, and said, 'Let them take me when and where my head physician advises.'"

At this recital I shed fresh tears. The duke afterwards told us that when la Martinière had quitted his majesty he went to ascertain the condition of the wretched girl who had introduced all this uneasiness among us, and after attentively examining her he exclaimed: "She is past all hope; God only knows what the consequences may be." This gloomy prognostic added still more to my distress, and whilst those around me strove to communicate fresh hopes and confidence to my tortured mind I remained in a state too depressed and dejected to admit even one ray of consolation.

The king was removed from Trianon, followed by all the persons belonging to his suite. The maréchale insisted upon deferring her departure till I quitted the place. We set out a few minutes after his majesty, and my coachman had orders to observe the same slow pace at which the royal carriage travelled. Scarcely had we reached Versailles, when mechanically directing my eyes towards the iron gate leading to the garden, a sudden paleness overspread my countenance and a cry of terror escaped me, for, leaning against the gate in question, I perceived that singular being who, after having foretold my elevation, had engaged to present himself before me when a sudden reverse was about to overtake me. This unexpected fulfilment of his promise threw me into the most cruel agitation, and I could not refrain from explaining the cause of my alarm to those who were with me. No sooner had I made myself understood than comte Jean stopped the carriage and jumped out with the intention of questioning this mysterious visitor. We waited with extreme impatience the return of my brotherin-law, but he came back alone, nor had he been able to discover the least trace of the object of his search. In

vain had he employed the two footmen from behind the carriage to examine all the avenues by which the man might have retired. Nothing could be heard of him, and I remained more than ever convinced that the entire fulfilment of the prophecy was at hand, and that the fatal hour would shortly strike which would witness my fall from all my pomp and greatness. We continued our route slowly and silently; the maréchale accompanied me to the door of my apartment, where I bade her adieu, spite of her wish to remain with me, but even her society was now fatiguing to me, and I longed to be alone with merely my own family.

My two sisters-in-law, the wife of comte d'Hargicourt and that of my nephew, were speedily assembled to talk over with me the events of the last twelve hours. I threw myself upon my bed in a state of mental and bodily fatigue impossible to describe. I strove in vain to collect my ideas and arm myself for what I well saw was approaching, and the exact appearance of the singular predicter of my destiny prepared me for the rapid accomplishing of all that had been promised.

Louis XV. during this fatal illness was placed under the care of Bordeu and Lemonnier. No particularly alarming symptoms appeared during that day, and we remained in a state of suspense more difficult to bear than even the most dreadful certainty. As soon as the king felt himself sufficiently recovered from the fatigues of his removal he requested to see me. After bestowing on me most gratifying marks of sincerest attachment he said:

"I am well punished, my dear countess, for my inconstancy towards you, but forgive me. I pray and believe that, however my fancy may wander, my heart is all your own."

"Is that quite true?" said I, smiling. "Have you not some reservations? Does not a noble damsel come in for a share, as well as the baroness de New—k?"

The king pressed my hand and replied:

"You must not believe all those idle tales. I met the baroness my chance, and for a time I thought her pretty. As for the other, if she renders you in any way uneasy let her be married at once and sent where we need never see her again."

"This is indeed the language of sincerity," cried I, "and from this moment I shall have the fullest confidence in you."

The conversation was carried on for a long while in this strain. The physicians had made so light of the complaint that the king believed his illness to be merely of a temporary nature, and his gayety and good spirits returned almost to their natural height. He inquired after madame de Mirepoix and whether my sisters-in-law were uneasy respecting his state of health. You may imagine that my reply was worded with all the caution necessary to keep him in profound ignorance as to his real condition. When I returned to my apartment I found Bordeu there, who appeared quite at a loss what to say respecting the king's malady, the symptoms still remaining too uncertain to warrant any person in calling it smallpox.

"And should it prove that horrible complaint?" inquired I.

"There would in that case be considerable danger," replied Bordeu, not without extreme embarrassment.

"Perhaps even to the extinction of all hope?" asked I.

"God alone can tell," returned Bordeu.

"I understand," interrupted I, quickly, "and spite of the mystery with which you would fain conceal the extent of his majesty's danger, I know and venture to assert that you consider him already as dead."

"Have a care, madame!" exclaimed Bordeu, "how you admit such an idea, and still more of proclaiming it. I pledge you my word that I do not consider the king is in danger. I have seen many cures equally extraordinary with his."

I shook my head in token of disbelief. I had uttered what I firmly supposed the truth, and the sight of my evil genius in the person of the prophet who had awaited my return to Versailles turned the encouraging words of Bordeu into a cold, heavy chill which struck to my heart. Bordeu quitted me to resume his attendance upon the king. After him came the duc d'Aiguillon, whose features bore the visible marks of care and disquiet. He met me with the utmost tenderness and concern, and asked the very smallest details of the disastrous events of the morning. I concealed nothing from him, and he listened to my recital with the most lively interest; and the account of the apparition of the wonderful being who seemed destined to follow me throughout my career was not the least interesting part of our conversation.

"There are," said the duke, "many very extraordinary things in this life; reason questions them, philosophy laughs at them, and yet it is impossible to deny that there are various hidden causes or sudden inspirations which have the greatest effect upon our destiny. As a proof I will relate to you the following circumstance. You are aware," continued the duke, "that the cardinal de Richelieu, the author of our good fortune, spite of the superiority of his mind, believed in judicial astrology. When his own immediate line became extinct by the unexpected death of his family and relatives he wished to ascertain what would be the fate of those children belonging to his sister whom he had adopted as the successor to his name. arms, and fortune. The planets were consulted, and the answer received was that two centuries from the day on which Providence had so highly elevated himself the family upon whom rested all his hopes of perpetuating his name should fail entirely in its male descent. You see that the duc de Fronsac has only one child, an infant not many days old. I also have but one, and these two feeble branches seem but little calculated to falsify the prediction. Judge, my dear countess, of my paternal anxiety!"

This relation on the part of the duc d'Aiguillon was but ill calculated to restore my drooping spirits, and although I had no reason for concluding that the astrologer had spoken prophetically to the grand cardinal I was not the less inclined to believe, with increased confidence, the predictions uttered respecting myself by my inexplicable visitor of the morning. My ever-kind friend, the duchesse d'Aiguillon, was not long ere she, too, made her appearance, with the view and in the hope of consoling me. I could not resist her earnest endeavors to rouse me from my grief, and a grateful sense of her goodness obliged me to deck my features with at least the semblance of cheerfulness. Every hour fresh accounts of the king's health were brought me of a most encouraging nature; by these bulletins one might naturally suppose him rapidly recovering, and we all began to smile at our folly in having been so soon alarmed. In fact, my spirits rose in proportion as those about me appeared full of fresh confidence. and the mysterious visit of my evil genius gradually faded from my recollection.

In this manner the day passed away. I visited the king from time to time, and he, although evidently much oppressed and indisposed, conversed with me without any painful effort. His affection for me seemed to gain fresh strength as his bodily vigor declined, and the fervent attachment he expressed for me, at a time when self might reasonably have been expected to hold possession of his mind, filled me with regret at not being able more fully to return so much tenderness. In the evening I wished to be alone. The maréchale de Mirepoix had sent to request a private interview, and I awaited her arrival in my chamber, whilst an immense concourse of visitors filled my salons. The king's danger was not yet sufficiently decided for the courtiers to abandon me, and the chances continued too strongly in my favor to warrant any one of them in withdrawing from me his or her usual attentions. Comte Jean, however, presented himself before me, spite of the orders I had given to exclude every person but the maréchale.

"My dear sister," cried he as he entered, "Chamilly has just told me that he has received the royal command to have Julie married off without delay. Now, this is a piece of delicacy towards yourself on the part of the king for which you owe him many thanks. But I have another communication to make you, of a less pleasing nature. The unfortunate girl, who has been left at Trianon, has called incessantly for you the whole of this day. She asserts that she has matters of importance to communicate to you."

Whatever surprise I experienced at this intelligence, it was impossible it could be otherwise than true, for was it likely that at such a time as the present comte Jean would attempt to impose such a tale upon me?

"What would you have me do?" I asked of my brother-in-law.

"Hark ye, sister," replied he, "we are both of us in a very critical situation just now and should spare no endeavor to extricate ourselves from it. Very possibly this girl may be in possession of facts more important than you at present conceive possible; the earnestness with which she perseveres in her desire of seeing you, and her repeated prayers to those around her to beg your attendance, prove that it is something more than the mere whim of a sick person, and in your place I should not hesitate to comply with her wishes."

"And how could we do so?" asked I.

"To-night," returned he, "when all your guests have retired, and Versailles is in a manner deserted, I will fetch you; we have keys which open the various gates in the park, and walking through which and the gardens we can reach Trianon unobserved. No person will be aware of our excursion, and we shall return with the same caution with which we went. We will, after our visit, cause our clothes to be burnt, take a bath, and use every

possible precaution to purify ourselves from all chance of infection. When that is done you may venture into the apartment of his majesty even if that malady which at present hangs over him should turn out to be smallpox."

I thought but little of the consequences of our scheme or of the personal danger I incurred, and I promised my brother-in-law that I would hold myself in readiness to accompany him. We then conversed together upon the state of the king, and—what you will have-some difficulty in crediting—not one word escaped either of us relative to our future plans or prospects; still, it was the point to which the thoughts of comte Jean must naturally have turned.

We were interrupted in our tête-à-tête by the arrival of the maréchale, whose exactitude I could not but admire. Comte Jean, having hastily paid his compliments, left us together.

"Well, my dear countess," said she, taking my hand with a friendly pressure, "and how goes on the dear invalid?"

"Better, I hope," replied I, "and indeed this illness, at first so alarming to me, seems rather calculated to allay my former fears and anxieties by affording the king calm and impartial reflection; the result of it all is that my dreaded rival is dismissed."

"I am delighted to hear this," replied madame de Mirepoix; "but, my dear soul, let me caution you against too implicitly trusting these deceitful appearances; to-morrow may destroy these flattering hopes, and the next day—"

"Indeed!" cried I, interrupting her, "the physicians answer for his recovery."

"And suppose they should chance to be mistaken," returned my cautious friend, "what then? But, my dear countess, my regard for you compels me to speak out and to warn you of reposing in tranquillity when you ought to be acting. Do not deceive yourself; leave nothing to

chance, and if you have any favor to ask of the king lose no time in so doing while yet you have the opportunity."

"And what favor would you advise me to ask?" said I.

"You do not understand me, then!" exclaimed the maréchale. "I say that it is imperatively necessary for you to accept whatever the king may feel disposed to offer you as a future provision and as affording you the means of passing the remainder of your days in ease and tranquillity. What would become of you in case of the worst? Your numerous creditors would besiege you with a rapacity still further excited by the support they would receive from court. You look at me with surprise because I speak the language of truth. Be a reasonable creature, I implore of you, once in your life, and do not thus sacrifice the interests of your life to a romantic disregard of self."

I could not feel offended with the maréchale for addressing me thus, but I could not help fancying the moment was ill chosen, and, unable to frame an answer to my mind, I remained silent. Mistaken as to the cause of my taciturnity, she continued:

"Come, I am well pleased to see you thus reflecting upon what I have said; but lose no time—strike the iron while it is hot. Do as I have recommended either tonight or early to-morrow; possibly after that time it may be too late. May I venture also to remind you of your friends, my dear countess? I am in great trouble just now, and I trust you will not refuse to obtain for me from his majesty a favor of which I stand in the utmost need—fifty thousand francs would come very seasonably. I have lost that sum at cards, and must pay it, but how I know not."

"Let not that distress you," said I, "for I can relieve you of that difficulty until the king's convalescence enables him to undertake the pleasing office of assisting your wishes. M. de Laborde has orders to honor all my drafts upon him. I will therefore draw for the sum you

require." So saying, I hastily scrawled upon a little tumbled piece of paper those magic words which had power to unlock the strong coffers of a court banker. The maréchale embraced me several times with the utmost vivacity.

"You are my guardian angel!" cried she; "you save me from despair. But, tell me, my generous friend, do you think M. de Laborde will make any difficulty?"

"Why," said I, "should you suppose it possible he will do so?"

"Oh, merely on account of present circumstances."

"What circumstances?"

"The illness—no, I mean the indisposition of his majesty."

"He is an excellent man," said I, "and I doubt not but he will act nobly and honorably."

"If we could but procure his majesty's signature—"

"But that is quite impossible to-night."

"I know it is, and therefore I will tell you what I think of doing. Perhaps, if I were to set out for Paris immediately I might be able to present this check before Laborde is acquainted with our misfortune. It is not late, so farewell, my dearest countess. I shall return to-morrow before you are up, but do not forget what I have said to you; and remember that under any circumstances the king should secure you a safe and ample independence. If his death finds you well provided for you will still have a court, friends, relatives, partisans—in a word, the means of gratifying every inclination. Be guided by me and follow my advice."

And after this lesson of practical morality the marechale quitted me to hurry to Paris, and I, wearied and heartsick, flew to my crowded salons as a remedy against the gloomy ideas her conversation had given rise to.

On this evening my guests were more numerous and brilliant than usual, for, no person entertaining the least suspicion of the king's danger, all vied with each other in evincing by their presence the desire they felt of expressing their regard for me. My friends, acquaintances, people whom I scarcely knew at all, were collected together in my drawing-rooms. This large assemblage of joyous and cheerful faces drove away for a moment all the gloom which had hung over me. I even forgot the morning's visitor, and if the health of the king were at all alluded to it was only en passant. It seemed a generally understood thing not to believe him seriously ill; in fact, to deny all possibility of such a thing being the case. Thus all went on as usual; scandal, slander, epigrams, jeux d'esprits, all the lively nonsense usually circulated upon such occasions went round and were laughed at and admired according to the tastes of those to whom they were addressed.

Could a stranger have seen us, so careless, thoughtless, and gay, he would have been far from suspecting that we were upon the eve of a catastrophe which must change the whole face of affairs in France. For my own part my spirits rose to a height with the giddy crowd around me, and in levity and folly I really believe I exceeded them.

At a late hour my rooms were at length forsaken, and I retired to my chamber, where, having dismissed my other attendants, I remained alone (as was frequently my custom) with my faithful Henriette, whom I caused to exchange my evening dress for a dark robe which I covered with a large Spanish mantle I had never before worn, and thus equipped I waited the arrival of comte Jean. Henriette, surprised at these preparations, pressed me with so many questions that at last I explained my whole purpose to her. The attached creature exerted all her eloquence to point out the dangers of the enterprise, which she implored of me to abandon, but I refused to listen to her remonstrances, and she ceased urging me further, only protesting she should await my return with the most lively impatience.

At length comte Jean appeared, armed with a small swordstick, pistols in pocket, and with every other precaution necessary for undertaking so perilous an adventure. We descended into the garden with many smiles at the singular figures we made, but no sooner were we in the open air than the sight of the clear heavens sparkling with stars, the cool still night, the vast walks lined with statues which resembled a troop of white phantoms, the gentle waving of the branches as the evening breeze stirred their leaves, with that feeling of awe and solemnity generally attendant upon the midnight hour, awoke in our minds ideas more suitable to our situation. We ceased speaking and walked slowly down the walk past the basin of the dragon, in order by crossing the park to reach the château de Trianon.

Fortune favored us, for we met only one guard in the park. This man, having recognized us as we drew near, saluted us and was about to retire when my brother-in-law called him back and desired him to take our key and with it open the nearest gates to the place which we wished to go to. He also commanded him to await our return. The soldier was accustomed to these nocturnal excursions even on the part of the most scrupulous and correct gentlemen and ladies of the court. He therefore assured us of his punctuality and opened for us a great iron gate which it would have cost my brother-in-law much trouble to have turned upon its hinges.

The nearer we approached the end of our journey the more fully did our minds become impressed with new and painful disquietudes. At length we reached the place of our destination.

My brother-in-law desired he might be announced, but said nothing of who I was. We were expected, for a Swiss belonging to the palace conducted us to a chamber at one end of the château, where, stretched on a bed of loathsome disease, was the creature who but a few hours before had been deemed worthy the embraces of a pow-

erful monarch. Beside her was an elderly woman, her mother, and an aged priest, who had been likewise summoned by the unfortunate girl, and her brother, a young man of about twenty-four years of age, with an eye of fire and a frame of Herculean power. The latter sat with his back turned towards the door. The mother, half reclining on the bed, held in her hand a handkerchief steeped in her tears, while the ecclesiastic read prayers to them from a book which he held. A nurse, whom we had not before perceived, answered the call of the Swiss and inquired of him what he wanted.

"I want nothing myself," answered he, "but here is comte Jean du Barry with a lady from Versailles. They say they come at the request of mademoiselle Anne."

We were now on the threshold of the door, and the nurse, crossing the chamber, spoke to the mother, who hastily arose, while the priest discontinued his prayers. The mother looked at us, then whispered some words to her daughter. The patient stirred in her bed, and the nurse, returning to us, said to comte Jean that he might approach the bed of the invalid.

He advanced and I followed him, although the noisome effluvia with which the air was loaded produced a sickness I scarcely could surmount. The gloom of the place was still further increased by the dim light of two wax candles placed in a nook of the room.

The priest, having recognized my brother-in-law, and suspecting, doubtless, who I was, was preparing to withdraw, but the sick girl made signs for him to remain. He obeyed, but, removing to a distance, he took his place beside the young man, who, understanding only that strangers had arrived, rose from his seat and displayed his tall, gigantic height to the fullest advantage.

CHAPTER XLI.

Interview with the joiner's daughter—Consultation of the physicians respecting the king—The smallpox declares itself—The comte de Muy—The princesses—Extreme sensibility of madame de Mirepoix—The king is kept in ignorance of his real condition—The archbishop of Paris visits Versailles.

HE gloomy and mysterious air scattered over the group which presented itself to our eyes filled us with desponding thoughts. There appeared throughout the party a kind of concentrated grief and silent despair which struck us with terror. We remained motionless in the same spot without any person quitting his fixed attitude to offer us a seat. After some minutes of a deep silence, which I durst not interrupt any more than comte Jean, whose accustomed hardihood seemed effectually checked, the suffering girl raised herself in her bed and in a hollow voice exclaimed:

"Comtesse du Barry, what brings you here?"

The sound of her hoarse and grating voice made me start, spite of myself.

"My poor child," answered I, tenderly, "I come to see you at your request."

"Yes, yes," replied she, bursting into a frightful fit of laughter, "I wished to see you to thank you for my dishonor and for the perdition into which you have involved me."

"My daughter," said the priest, approaching her, "is this what you promised me?"

"And what did I promise to God when I vowed to hold myself chaste and spotless? Perjured wretch that I am, I have sold my honor for paltry gold; wheedled by the deceitful flattery of that man who stands before me, I joined his infamous companion in the path of guilt and shame. But the just vengeance of heaven has overtaken me, and I am rightly punished."

Whether this language was the result of a previously studied lesson I know not, but it was ill calculated to

raise my failing spirits.

"My child, my beloved child!" exclaimed the weeping mother: "fear not, God is merciful and will accept your sincere abhorrence of your fault. I have this day offered in your name a fine wax taper to your patroness, Sainte-Anne, who will no doubt intercede for you."

"No, no!" replied the unhappy girl; "there is no longer any hope for me, and the torments I now suffer are but preludes to those I am doomed to endure everlastingly."

This singular scene almost convulsed me with agitation. I seized the arm of my brother-in-law with the intention of escaping from so miserable a spot. The invalid perceived my design and vehemently exclaimed:

"Stay, comtesse du Barry! I have not yet finished with you. I have not yet announced the full revenge I shall take for your share in my present hopeless condition. Your infamous exaltation draws to a close. The same poison which is destroying me circulates in the veins of him you have too long governed, but your reign is at an end. He will soon quit his earthly crown, and my hand strikes the blow which sends him hence. But still, dying a victim to a cruel and loathsome complaint, I go to my grave triumphing over my haughty rival, for I shall die the last possessor of the king's affections. Heavens! what agonies are these!" cried she; then, after a short silence, she continued, extending to me her arms, hideous with the leprous blotches of her disgusting malady, "yes, you have been my destruction; your accursed example led me to sell myself for the wages of infamy. and to the villanous artifices of the man who brought you here I owe all my sufferings. I am dying more young. more beautiful, more beloved than you. I am hurried to an untimely end. God of heaven! Die! Did I say die? I cannot, will not. Mother, save your child! Brother, help me! save me!"

"My daughter! my darling child!" cried the despairing mother, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly.

"My dearest sister Anne, what can I do for you?" inquired the young man, whose stern features were melted into mere womanish tenderness.

"Daughter," interrupted the priest, "God is good; he can and will forgive you if you heartily turn to him with a sincere desire to atone for your fault."

All this took place in less time than it has taken in the recital. My brother-in-law seemed completely deprived of his usual self-possession by this burst of frightful raving. His feet appeared rooted to the floor of the chamber. His color changed from white to red, and a cold perspiration covered his brows. For my own part I was moved beyond description, but my faculties seemed spellbound, and when I strove to speak my tongue cleaved to my mouth.

The delirium of poor Anne continued for some time to find utterance by convulsive gesticulation, half-uttered expressions, and occasionally loud and vehement imprecations. At length, quite exhausted with her violence, which required all the efforts of her brother to subdue by positive force, she sunk into a state of insensibility. The priest, on his knees, implored in a loud voice the mercy of Providence for the king and all his subjects. Had any person conceived the design of working on my fears so far as to induce me to abandon a life at court, he could not have succeeded more entirely than by exhibiting to me the scene I have been describing. Had not many contending ideas enabled me to bear up under all I saw and heard, my senses must have forsaken me; under common circumstances the aspect of the brother alone would have terrified me exceedingly, and even now I cannot recollect without a shudder the looks of dark and sinister meaning he alternately directed at me and at comte Jean. At this moment the doctor who had the charge of the unhappy girl arrived. The warmth and

eagerness of manner with which he addressed me directly he perceived my presence might have proved to all around that I was not the hateful creature I had been described. This well-timed interruption restored to me the use of my faculties, and, repulsing the well-meant attentions of my medical friend, I exclaimed: "Do not heed me, I conjure you; I am only temporarily indisposed. But hasten to that poor girl whose dangerous state requires all your care."

My brother-in-law, recovering himself by a strong effort, profited by the present opportunity to remove me into another apartment, the pure air of which contributed to cool my fevered brain; but my trembling limbs refused to support me, and it was necessary to apply strong restoratives ere I sufficiently recovered to quit the fatal spot. At Trianon as well as at Versailles I was considered absolute mistress. Those of the royal household who were aware of my being at the former earnestly solicited me to retire to the chamber I had occupied on the preceding night, but to this arrangement the comte and myself were equally opposed. A sedan chair was therefore procured in which I was rapidly transported back to Versailles.

You may easily conceive in what a state I arrived there. My good Henriette was greatly alarmed, and immediately summoned Bordeu, who, not venturing to bleed me, contented himself with administering some cordials which revived me in some degree. But the events of the last few hours seemed indelibly fixed in my mind, and I heard almost with indifference the bulletin issued respecting the state of the king's health during the fatal night which had just passed. One object alone engrossed my thoughts. My eyes seemed still to behold the miserable girl stretched on her death-bed, whose ravings of despair and threatening words yet rung in my ears and produced a fresh chill of horror as with painful tenacity my mind dwelt upon them to the utter exclusion of every other

consideration. The unfortunate creature expired on the third day, a victim to the rapid progress of the most virulent species of smallpox. She died more calmly and resigned than I had seen her. For my own part I freely pardoned her injustice towards myself, and sincerely forgive the priest if he (as I have been told) excited her bitterness against me.

The severe shock I had experienced might have terminated fatally for me had not my thoughts been compelled to rouse themselves for the contemplation of the alarming prospect before me. It was more than four o'clock in the morning when I returned to the château, and at nine I rose again without having obtained the least repose. The king had inquired for me several times. I instantly went to him, and my languid frame, pale countenance, and heavy eyes, all of which he took as the consequences of my concern for his indisposition, appeared greatly to affect him, and he sought to comfort me by the assurance of his being considerably better. This was far from being true, but he was far from suspecting the nature of the malady to which his frame was about to become a prev. The physicians had now pronounced with certainty on the subject, nor was it possible to mystify me with it, who had seen Anne on her sick-bed.

In common with all who knew the real nature of the complaint I sought to conceal it from the king, and in this deception the physicians themselves concurred. In the course of the morning a consultation took place; when called upon for their opinion each of them endeavored to evade a direct answer, disguising the name of his majesty's disease under the appellation of a cutaneous eruption, chicken-pox, etc., etc., none daring to give it its true denomination. Bordeu and Lemonnier pursued this cautious plan, but la Martinière, who had first of all pronounced his decision on the subject, impatient of so much circumlocution on the part of those around him, could no longer repress his indignation.

"How is this, gentlemen!" exclaimed he; "is science at a standstill with you? Surely you cannot be in any doubt on the subject of the king's illness. His majesty has smallpox, with a complication of other diseases equally dangerous, and I look upon him as a dead man."

"Monsieur de la Martinière," cried the duke de Duras, who in quality of his office of first gentleman of the bedchamber was present at this conference, "allow me to remind you that you are expressing yourself very imprudently."

"Duc de Duras," replied the abrupt la Martinière, "my business is not to flatter the king, but to tell him the truth with regard to his health. None of the medical gentlemen present can deny the truth of what I have asserted. They are all of my opinion, although I alone have the courage to act with that candor which my sense of honor dictates."

The unbroken silence preserved by those who heard this address clearly proved the truth of all la Martinière advanced. The duc de Duras was but too fully convinced of the justice of his opinion.

"The king is, then, past all hope," repeated he, "and what remains to be done?"

"To watch over him and administer every aid and relief which art suggests," was the brief reply of la Martinière.

The different physicians when separately questioned hesitated no longer to express their concurrence in the opinion that his majesty's case was entirely hopeless, unless, indeed, some crisis which human foresight could not anticipate should arise in his favor.

This opinion changed the moral face of the château. The duc de Duras, who had not previously suspected even the existence of danger, began to feel how weighty a burden reposed on his shoulders. He recommended to the medical attendants the utmost caution and silence, pointing out at the same time all the ill-consequences

which might arise were any imprudent or sudden explanation of his real malady made to the august sufferer. Unable to attend to everything himself, and not inclined to depend upon his son, whose natural propensity he was fully aware of, he recalled to his recollection that the comte de Muy, the sincere and attached friend of the dauphin, grandson to Louis XV., was then in Versailles. He immediately sought him out in the apartments he occupied in the château and communicated to him the result of the consultation respecting the king's illness.

The comte de Muy was one of those rare characters reserved by Providence for the happiness of a state when kings are wise enough to employ them. He thought not of personal interest or advantage, but dictated to the duke the precise line of conduct he himself would have pursued under similar circumstances.

"The first thing to be done," said he, "is to remember that the king is a Christian and to conform in every respect to the customs of his predecessors. You are aware, my lord duke, that directly any member of the royal family is attacked by smallpox he ought immediately to receive extreme unction. You will therefore make the necessary arrangements and apprise those whose duty it becomes to administer it."

"This is indeed an unpleasant commission," replied the duke. "To administer extreme unction to his majesty is to announce to him cruelly and abruptly that his last hour has arrived and to bid him prepare for death."

"The duty is nevertheless imperative," answered the comte de Muy, "and you incur no slight responsibility by neglecting it."

The consequence of this conversation was that the duke sent off two couriers immediately, one to madame Louise and the other to the archbishop of Paris. He also apprised the ministers of the result of the consultation which had taken place, whilst the comte de Muy took upon himself the painful office of acquainting the dauphin with the dangerous state of his grandfather. This young prince, whose first impulses were always amiable, immediately burst into tears. The dauphiness endeavored to console him. But from that moment her royal highness appeared to show by her lofty and dignified bearing her consciousness of the fresh importance she had necessarily acquired in the eyes of the nation. Meanwhile the dauphin hastened to the sick-room of his beloved relative, anxious to bestow upon him the cares and attentions of a son: but in the anteroom his progress was stopped by the duc de la Vrillière, who informed him that the interests of the throne would not permit his royal highness to endanger his life by inhaling the contagious atmosphere of a room loaded with the venom of smallpox. He adjured him in the name of the king and his country not to risk such fearful chances. The lords in attendance, who did not partake the heroism of the young prince, added their entreaties to those of le petit saint, and succeeded at length in prevailing upon him to return to his apartments, to the great joy of Marie Antoinette, who could not endure the prospect of being separated from her husband at so important a juncture.

No sooner had the princesses learned the danger of their august parent than without an instant's hesitation they hurried to him. I was in his chamber when they arrived. They saluted me with great gentleness and affability. When the king saw them he inquired what had brought them thither at so unusual an hour.

"We are come to see you, my dearest father," replied madame Adélaïde; "we have heard of your indisposition, and, trifling as it is said to be, we could not rest without satisfying our anxious wish to know how you found yourself."

The other sisters expressed themselves in similar terms. "It is all very well, my children," said Louis XV., with a pleasing smile, "and you are all three very excellent girls; but I would rather you should keep away from this

close room. It can do you no good, and I promise to let you know if I find myself getting any worse."

After a slight resistance the princesses feigned an obedience to his will, but in reality they merely retired into an adjoining chamber, concealed from the sight of their parent, where they remained until the moment when they undertook the charge of the patient. Their heroic devotion was the admiration of all France and Europe.

Much as their presence constrained me, I still kept my place beside the sick-bed of his majesty, who would not suffer me to leave him for a minute.

At an early hour the maréchale de Mirepoix returned, according to her promise. I met her in the corridor as I was passing along on my way to the king's apartment. Her face was full of cheerful smiles.

"How greatly am I obliged to you for your prompt succor!" said she, without even inquiring after my health or that of the king. "Do you know, I was but just in time. Ten minutes later, and I should have been refused payment for your check. M. de Laborde, who was so devotedly your friend only yesterday, counted out to me the glittering coin I was so anxious to obtain. He even accompanied me to my carriage, when behold! just at the moment when, with his hat in his hand, he was most gallantly bowing and wishing me a pleasant journey, a courier arrived from Versailles bringing him the news of the king's illness. He looked so overwhelmed with consternation and alarm that I could not prevent myself from bursting into a hearty fit of laughter, nor has my gayety forsaken me up to the present moment."

"You are very fortunate," said I, "to be enabled thus to preserve your good spirits."

"My dear creature, I would fain cheat Time of some of his claims upon me. But, now I think of it, what is the matter since I was here? Is the king worse, and what is this I hear whispered abroad of smallpox?"

"Alas! madame," answered I, much hurt at the insensi-

bility she displayed, "we run but too great danger of losing our friend and benefactor forever."

"Dear me, how very shocking! But what has he settled on you? What have you asked him for?"

"Nothing," replied I, coolly.

"Nothing! Very admirable, indeed! But, my good soul, these fine sentiments sometimes leave people to eat the bread of charity. So, then, you have not followed my advice. Once more, I repeat, lose not the present opportunity; and in your place I would set about securing my own interest without one instant's delay."

"That I could not do, madame," said I; "it is wholly foreign to my nature to take advantage of the weakness

of a dying man."

"Dying man!" repeated the maréchale, incredulously; "come, come! he is not dead yet, and whilst there is life there is hope; and I suppose you have carried your ideas of disinterestedness so far as to omit mentioning your friends likewise. You will never have any worldly sense, I believe. My dear soul," said she, stooping down and whispering in my ear, "you are surrounded by a set of selfish wretches who care nothing for you unless you can forward their interests."

"I see it! I know it!" exclaimed I, impatiently; "but though I beg my bread I will not importune the king."

"As you please!" cried madame de Mirepoix; "pray do not let me disturb your intentions. Silly woman that you are, leave others to act the sublime and grand, your part should be that of a reasonable creature. Look at myself; suppose I had not seized the ball at the bound?"

"You were born at Versailles," answered I, smiling in

spite of myself.

"True, and I confess that with me the greatest of all sense is common-sense, which produces that instinctive feeling of self-preservation implanted even in animals.

"t is the king indeed so very ill?"

^{&#}x27;e is, indeed, dangerously ill."

"I am very sorry," answered she; "his majesty and myself were such old friends and companions. But things will now be very different, and we shall soon see the court filled with new faces, whilst you and I, my poor countess, may hide our diminished heads. A set of hungry wretches will drive us away from the princely banquet at which we have so long regaled, and scarcely will their eagerness leave us a few scattered crumbs—how dreadful! Yes, I repeat that for many reasons we shall have just cause for regretting the late king."

"The 'late' king!" exclaimed I. "His majesty is not yet dead, madame la maréchale."

"I know that, but he will die, and by speaking of the event as if it had already taken place we prepare our minds to meet the blow with greater resignation when it does fall. I am much concerned, I can assure you; but let us quit the close, confined air of this corridor and go where we may breathe a purer atmosphere."

She took me by the arm with a greater familiarity than she had ever before assumed and led the way to my chamber, where I found the duc de la Vrillière awaiting me to request I would return to the king, who had asked for me more than once. This consummate hypocrite seized the present opportunity of renewing his assurances of an unalterable attachment to me, vowing an eternal friendship. I was weak enough to believe him, and when I gave him my hand in token of reconciliation I espied the maréchale standing behind him making signals to me to distrust his professions.

I know not the reason of this conduct on the part of the duc de la Vrillière, but I can only suppose it originated in his considering the king in less danger than he was said to be; however, I suffered him to lead me to the chamber of the invalid. When Louis XV. saw me return he inquired why I had quitted him. I replied that I was fearful of wearying him; he assured me he felt easy and comfortable only so long as I was with him.

"But perhaps there is some contagion in my present complaint!" exclaimed he, as though laboring under some painful idea.

"Certainly not," replied I. "It is but a temporary eruption of the skin which will no doubt carry off the fever you have suffered with."

"I feared it was of a more dangerous nature," answered the king.

"You torment yourself needlessly, sire," said I. "Why should you thus create phantoms for your own annoyance and alarm? Tranquillize yourself and leave the task of curing you to us."

I easily penerated the real import of his words. He evidently suspected the truth, and was filled with the most cruel dread of having his suspicions confirmed. During the whole of this day he continued in the same state of uncertainty. The strictest watch was set around him that no imprudent confession should reveal to him the real nature of his situation. I continued sitting beside him in a state of great constraint from the knowledge of my being closely observed by the princesses, of whose vicinity we durst not inform him in the fear of exciting his fears still more.

The courier who had been despatched to madame Louise returned, bringing a letter from that princess to her sisters, under cover to madame Adélaïde, in which she implored of them not to suffer any consideration to prevent their immediately acquainting their father with the dangerous condition he was in. The duty, she added, was imperative, and the greatest calamity that could befall them would be to see this dearly loved parent expire in a state of sinful indifference as to his spiritual welfare.

The august recluse, detached from all sublunary considerations, saw nothing but the glorious hereafter, where she would fain join company with all her beloved friends and connections of this world.

The archbishop of Paris, M. de Beaumont, a prelate

highly esteemed for his many excellent private qualities, but who had frequently embarrassed the king by his pertinacity, did not forget him on this occasion: for no sooner did the account of his majesty's illness reach him than, although suffering with a most painful complaint. he hastened to Versailles, where his presence embarrassed everyone, particularly the grand almoner, who, a better courtier than priest, was excessively careful never to give offence to any person, even though the king's salvation depended upon it. He therefore kept his apartment, giving it out that he was indisposed, and even took to his bed the better to avoid any disagreeable or inconvenient request. The sight of the archbishop of Paris was far from being agreeable to him. This prelate went first in search of the princesses, who were not to be seen on account of their being with their father. A message was despatched to them, and mesdames Adélaïde and Sophie, after having a long conference with him, by his advice summoned the bishops of Meaux, Goss, and de Senlis, and held a species of council in which it was unanimously agreed that nothing ought to prevent their entering upon an explanation with the king and offering him spiritual succor.

Who was to undertake the delicate commission became the next point to consider. M. de Roquelaure declined, not wishing, as he said, to infringe upon the rights of the grand almoner, who was now at Versailles. M. de la Roche Aymon was therefore sent for, requesting his immediate attendance. Never did invitation arrive more mal à propos or more cruelly disturb any manuœvring soul. However, to refuse was impossible, and the cardinal arrived, execrating the zeal of his reverend brother of Paris, who, after having explained the state of affairs to him, informed him that he was sent for for the purpose of discharging his office by preparing the king for confession.

The grand almoner replied that the sacred duty by no

MEMOIRS OF JEANNE VAUBERNIER

means belonged to him; that his place at court was of a very different nature and had nothing at all to do with directing the king's conscience. His majesty, he said, had a confessor, who ought to be sent for, and the very sight of him in the royal chamber would be sufficient to apprise the illustrious invalid of the motives which brought him thither. In a word, the grand almoner got rid of the affair by saying that "as it was one of the utmost importance it would be necessary to confer with his royal highness the dauphin respecting it."

CHAPTER XLII.

First proceedings of the council—The dauphin receives the prelates with great coolness—Situation of the archbishop of Paris—Richelieu evades the project for confessing the king—The friends of madame du Barry come forward—The English physician—The abbé Terray—Interview with the prince de Soubise—The prince and the courtiers—La Martinière informs the king of the true nature of his complaint—Consequences of this disclosure.

THE different members of this impromptu council declared themselves in favor of this advice, much to the grief and chagrin of the princesse Adélaïde. She easily perceived by this proposition that the court would very shortly change masters, and could she hope to preserve the same influence during the reign of her nephew she had managed to obtain whilst her father held the sceptre? However, she made no opposition to the resolution of the prelates, who forthwith proceeded to the dauphin, who received them with considerable coolness. As yet, but ill assured in the new part he had to play, the prince showed himself fearful and embarrassed. The dauphiness would willingly have advised him, but that prudence would not permit her to do. so that the dauphin, left wholly to himself, knew not on what to determine.

This was precisely what the grand almoner had hoped and expected, and he laughed in his sleeve at the useless trouble taken by the archbishop, and whilst he openly affected to promote his desires as much as was in his power he secretly took measures to prevent their success. M. de Beaumont, who was of a most open and upright nature, was far from suspecting these intrigues; indeed, his simple and pious character but ill qualified him for the corrupt and deceitful atmosphere of a court,

especially such a one as Versailles. His situation now became one of difficulty; abandoned by the bishops and the grand almoner, disappointed in his hopes of finding a supporter in the dauphin, what could he do alone with the princesses, who, in their dread of causing an emotion which might be fatal to their parent, knew not what to resolve upon? As a last resource they summoned the abbé Mandaux, the king's confessor. The prelate excited his zeal in all its fervor, and this simple and obscure priest determined to undertake that which many more eminent personages had shrunk from attempting.

He therefore sought admittance into the chamber of the king, where he found the ducs de Duras and de Richelieu, to whom he communicated the mission upon which he was come.

At this declaration, the consequences of which he plainly foresaw, the duc de Duras hesitated to reply, scarcely knowing how to ward off a blow the responsibility of which must fall upon him alone. The duc de Richelieu, with greater self-command, extricated him from his difficulty.

"Sir," said he to the abbé, "your zeal is highly praise-worthy; both the duke and myself are aware of all that should be done upon such an occasion as the present, and although I freely admit that the sacred act you speak of is of an imperative nature, yet I would observe that the king being still in ignorance of his fatal malady neither your duties nor ours can begin until the moment when the physicians shall have thought proper to reveal the whole truth to his majesty. This is a matter of form and etiquette to which all must submit who have any functions to fulfil in the château."

The duc de Duras could have hugged his colleague for this well-timed reply. The abbé Mandaux felt all the justness of the observation, yet with all the tenacity of his profession he replied:

"Since it rests with the physicians to apprise the king

of his being ill with smallpox, they ought to be summoned and consulted as to the part to take."

At these words the duc de Duras slipped away from the group and went himself in search of doctor Bordeu, whom he brought into an angle of the chamber out of sight of the king's bed. The duc de Duras having explained to him what the abbé had just been saying to them, as well as the desire he had manifested of preparing the king to receive the last sacraments, the doctor regarded the abbé fixedly for some time and then inquired in a severe tone whether he had promised any person to murder the king.

This abrupt and alarming question made the priest change color, whilst he asked for an explanation of such a singular charge.

"I say, sir," replied Bordeu, "that whoever speaks at present to his majesty of smallpox, confession, or extreme unction will have to answer for his life."

"Do you indeed believe," asked the duc de Richelieu, "that the mention of these things would produce so fatal a result?"

"Most assuredly I do; and out of one hundred sick persons it would have the same effect upon sixty, perhaps eighty. Indeed, I have known the shock produce instantaneous death. This I am willing to sign with my own blood if necessary, and my professional brother there will not dispute its truth."

At these words he made a sign for Lemonnier to advance, and, after having explained to him the subject of conversation, begged of him to speak his opinion openly and candidly. Lemonnier was somewhat of a courtier, and one glance at the two noblemen before whom he stood was sufficient to apprise him what opinion was expected from him. He therefore fully and unhesitatingly confirmed all that Bordeu had previously advanced.

Strong in these decisions, the duc de Duras expressed his regret to the confessor at being unable to accord his request. "But," added he, "you perceive the thing is impossible, unless to him who would become a regicide."

This terrible expression renewed the former terror of the abbé, who, satisfied with having shown his zeal, was perhaps not very sorry for having met with such insurmountable obstacles. He immediately returned to the apartment of madame Sophie, where the council was still assembled, and related the particulars of his visit, whilst the poor archbishop of Paris, thus foiled in every attempt, was compelled to leave Versailles wholly unsuccessful.

I heard all these things from the duc de Richelieu; he told me that nothing could have been more gratifying than the conduct of Bordeu and Lemonnier, and that I had every reason for feeling satisfied with the conduct of all around me. "It is in the moment of peril," said he, "that we are best able to know our true friends."

"I see it," replied I; "and since our danger is a mutual one, ought we not to forget our old subjects of dispute?"

"For my own part, madame," returned he, "I do not remember that any ever existed; besides, is not my cause yours likewise? A new reign will place me completely in the background. The present king looks upon me as almost youthful, while on the contrary his grandson will consider me as a specimen of the days of Methuselah. The change of masters can be but to my disadvantage. Let us therefore stand firmly together that we may be the better enabled to resist the attacks of our enemies."

"Do you consider," inquired I, "that we may rely upon the firmness of the duc de Duras?"

"As safely as you may rely on mine," answered he, "so long as he is not attacked face to face; but if they once assail him with the arms of etiquette he is a lost man, he will capitulate. It is unfortunate for him that I am not likely to be near him upon such an occasion."

Comte Jean, who never left me, then took up the conversation and advised M. de Richelieu to leave him to himself as little as possible. It was therefore agreed that

we should cause the duc de Duras to be constantly surrounded by persons of our party who should keep those of our adversaries at a distance.

We had not yet lost all hope of seeing his majesty restored to health. Nature, so languid and powerless in the case of poor Anne, seemed inclined to make a salutary effort on the part of the king.

Every instant of this day and the next that I did not spend by the sick-bed of Louis XV. was engrossed by my most intimate friends: the ducs d'Aiguillon, de Cossé, etc., mesdames de Mirepoix, de Forcalquier, de Valentinois, de l'Hôpital, de Montmorency, de Flaracourt, and others. As yet none of my party had abandoned me; the situation of affairs was not up to the present sufficiently clear to warrant an entire defection. The good Geneviève Mathon, whom chance had conducted to Versailles during the last week, came to share with Henriette, my sisters-in-law, and my niece the torments and uncertainties which distracted my mind. We were continually in a state of mortal alarm, dreading every instant to hear that the king was aware of his malady and the danger which threatened, and our fears but too well proclaimed our persuasion that such a moment would be the deathblow to our hopes. It happened that in this exigency, as it most commonly occurs in affairs of great importance, all our apprehensions had been directed towards the ecclesiastics, while we entirely overlooked the probability that the abrupt la Martinière might in one instant become the cause of our ruin. All this so entirely escaped us that we took not the slightest precaution to prevent it.

No sooner was the news of the king being attacked with smallpox publicly known than a doctor Sulton, an English physician, the pretended professor of an infallible cure for this disease, presented himself at Versailles and tendered his services. The poor man was simple enough to make his first application to those medical attendants already intrusted with the management of his majesty,

but neither of them would give any attention to his professions of skill to overcome so fatal a malady. On the contrary, they treated him as a mere quack, and declared that they would never consent to confide the charge of their august patient to the hands of a stranger, whatever he might be. Sulton returned to Paris, and, obtaining an audience of the duc d'Orléans, related to him what had passed between himself and the king's physicians. prince made it his business the following day to call upon the princesses, to whom he related the conversation he had held with doctor Sulton the preceding evening.

In their eagerness to avail themselves of every chance for promoting the recovery of their beloved parent the princesses blamed the duke for having bestowed so little attention upon the Englishman, and conjured him to return to Paris, see Sulton, and bring him to Versailles on the following day. The duc d'Orléans acted in strict conformity with their wishes, and although but little satisfied with the replies made by Sulton to many of his questions relative to the measures he should pursue in his treatment of the king, he caused him to accompany him to Versailles in order that the princesses might judge for themselves. The task of receiving him was undertaken by madame Adélaïde. Sulton underwent a rigorous examination, and was offered an immense sum for the discovery of his secret provided he would allow his remedy to be subjected to the scrutiny of some of the most celebrated chemists of the time. Sulton declared that the thing was impossible; in the second place, it was too late, the disease was too far advanced, for the application of the remedy to possess that positive success it would have obtained in the earlier stage of the malady; in the next place, he could not of himself dispose of a secret which was the joint property of several members of his family.

Prayers, promises, entreaties were alike uselessly employed to change the resolution of Sulton; the fact was evidently this: he knew himself to be a mere pretender to his art, for had he been certain of what he advanced—had he even conceived the most slender hopes of saving the life of the king—he would not have hesitated for a single instant to do all that was asked.

This chance of safety was therefore at an end, and spite of the opinion I entertained of Sulton I could not but feel sorry Bordeu had not given him a better reception when he first made known his professed ability to surmount this fatal disorder. However, I was careful not to express my dissatisfaction, for it was but too important for me to avoid any dispute at a time when the support of my friends had become so essentially necessary to me.

In proportion as the king became worse my credit also declined. Two orders addressed to the comptroller-general and M. de Laborde for money met with no attention. The latter replied with extreme politeness that the hundred thousand francs received by comte Jean a few days before the king was taken ill, and the fifty thousand paid to madame de Mirepoix recently, must be a convincing proof in my eyes of his friendly intentions towards me, but that he had no money at present in his possession; the first he received should be at my disposal.

The abbé Terray acted with less ceremony, for he came himself to say that so long as the king remained ill he would pay no money without his majesty's signature, for which my brother-in-law might either ask or wait till there no longer existed any occasion for such a precaution, and that for his own part he could not conceive how he could have consumed the enormous sums he had already drawn from the treasury.

This manner of speaking stung me to the quick.

"I find you," said I to him, "precisely the mean, contemptible wretch you were described to me; but you are premature. I am not yet an exile from court, and yet you seem already to have forgotten all you owe to me."

"I have a very good memory, madame," replied he,

"and if you wish it I can count upon my fingers the money you and your family have received of me. You will see—"

"What shall I see," interrupted I, "unless, indeed, it be an amount of your regrets that such a sum was not left in your hands to be pillaged by your mistresses and their spurious offspring? Really, to hear you talk, anyone would suppose you a Sully for integrity and a Colbert in financial talent."

This vigorous reply staggered the selfish and coarseminded abbé, who easily perceived that he had carried matters too far, and had reckoned erroneously upon the feebleness and timidity of my natural disposition; he attempted to pacify me, but his cowardly insolence had exasperated me too highly to admit of any apology or peacemaking.

"Have a care what you do," said I, "or rather employ yourself in packing up whatever may belong to you, for you shall quit your post, whatever may befall. In the event of the king's death you will certainly be turned out by his successor, and if he regain his health he must then choose between you and me—there can be no medium. Henceforward you may consider me only in the light of your mortal enemy."

He wished to insist upon my hearing him, but I exclaimed: "Quit the room! I wish neither to see nor hear more of you."

The abbé saw that it was necessary to obey. He therefore bowed and retired. Two hours afterwards he sent me the sum which I had asked of him for my brother-in-law, accompanied by a most humble and contrite letter. Certainly, had I only listened to the inspiration of my heart, I should have sent back the money without touching it, and the epistle without reading it; but my heroism did not suit comte Jean, who chanced to be present. "Take it, take it!" cried he. "The only way of punishing such a miscreant is to break his purse-strings. He

would, indeed, have the laugh on his side were your fit of anger to change into a fit of generosity. Besides, this may be the last we shall ever see."

My brother-in-law and the comptroller-general were an excellent pair. I treated the latter with silent contempt, not even replying to his letter; this was, however, my first and only stroke of vengeance: the disastrous events which followed did not permit me to pursue my plans for revenging this treacherous and contemptible conduct.

This quarrel and the defection of the "worthy" abbé had the effect of rendering me much indisposed. My illness was attributed to an excess of sorrow for the dangerous condition of his majesty, nor did I contradict the report; for in truth I did most sincerely lament the malady with which the king was suffering, and my regrets arose far more from a feeling of gratitude and esteem than from any self-interested calculations. It was therefore in no very excellent humor that I saw the prince de Soubise enter my apartment. You may remember that this nobleman had quitted Trianon without saying one word to me, and since that period I had never seen him, although he had punctually made his inquiries after the king. When I perceived him I could not help inquiring, with something of a sarcastic expression, whether his majesty had been pronounced convalescent. The prince comprehended the bitterness of the question.

"You are severe, madame," replied he; "yet I can solemnly affirm that circumstances, and not inclination, kept me from your presence until now."

"May I believe you?" said I. "Are you quite sure you have not been imitating the policy of the abbé Terray?" Upon which I related the behavior of the comptrollergeneral.

"Priest-like," answered the prince.

"And is it not 'courtier'-like also?" inquired I.

"Perhaps it may," rejoined M. de Soubise; "for the two species of priest and courtier so nearly resemble each

other in many particulars as to have become wellnigh amalgamated into one; but I claim your indulgence to make me an exception to the general rule, and to class me as a soldier and a man of honor; besides which, you are too lovely ever to be forgotten, and your past goodness to me will insure you my services, let what may occur."

"Well, then," said I, extending my hand, "as a reward for your candor, which I receive as genuine, I will request your forgiveness for any annoyance I may have caused you on your family's account. I ought never to have resented anything they have done. My presence here could not fail of being highly disagreeable to them. However, they will soon be relieved from that source of uneasiness; my stay draws rapidly to a close."

The prince de Soubise, with a ready grace and obliging manner, for which I shall ever remember him with a grateful recollection, endeavored to dispel my apprehensions as to the state of the king, but whilst I acknowledged the kindness of his intention my heart refused all comfort in a case which I too well knew was utterly hopeless.

The state of affairs was now so manifest that already an obsequious crowd besieged the doors of the dauphin, anxious to be first in the demonstration of their adoration of the rising sun; but the young prince, aided by the clear-minded advice of his august spouse, refused with admirable prudence to receive such premature homage, and since he was interdicted by the physicians from visiting the royal invalid he confined himself within his apartments, admitting no person but a select few who possessed his confidence.

The disappointed satellites, frustrated in their endeavors to ingratiate themselves with the dauphin, turned their thoughts towards the comte de Provence, imagining that this prince, spite of his extreme youth, might have considerable influence over the mind of his brother, the

dauphin. But this idea, however plausible, was by no means correct; it was too much the interest of ambitious and mercenary men to create a want of harmony between the royal pair, and up to the moment in which I am writing no attempts have been made to produce a kinder and more fraternal feeling between two such near relatives.

I quitted the king as little as possible, watching with deep concern the progress of a malady the nature of which was a secret to himself alone; for, in the dread of incurring my displeasure, no person had ventured to acquaint him with the awful fact. By the aid of the grand almoner I had triumphed over the wishes of the archbishop of Paris and those of the confessor. The princes and princesses awaited the event; all was calm composure when all at once the barriers I had been so carefully erecting were crushed beneath my feet at one sudden and unexpected blow.

The king was by no means easy in his own mind with regard to his illness. The many messages that were continually whispered around him, the remedies administered, and, above all, the absence of his grandsons, all convinced him that something of a very unusual and alarming nature was progressing. His own feelings might likewise well assure him that he was attacked by an illness of no ordinary nature. Tortured beyond further bearing by the suggestions of his fancy, Louis XV. at length resolved to ascertain the truth, and with this intent closely questioned Bordeu and Lemonnier, who did their best to deceive him. Still, dissatisfied with their evasive replies, he watched an opportunity when they were both absent to desire la Martinière would at once explain the true malady with which he was then suffering. La Martinière, puzzled and confused, could only exclaim:

"I entreat of you, sire, not to fatigue yourself with conversation; remember how strongly you have been forbidden all exertion."

"I am no child, la Martinière!" cried Louis XV., his cheeks glowing with increased fire, "and I insist upon being made acquainted with the precise nature of my present illness. You have always served me loyally and faithfully, and from you I expect to receive that candid statement everyone about me seems bent upon concealing."

"Endeavor to get some sleep, sire," rejoined la Martinière, "and do not exhaust yourself by speaking at pres-

ent."

"La Martinière, vou irritate me beyond all endurance. If you love me, speak out, I conjure you, and tell me frankly the name of my complaint."

"Do you insist upon it, sire?"

"I do, my friend, I do!"

"Then, sire, you have smallpox; but be not alarmed: it is a disease as frequently cured as many others."

"Smallpox!" exclaimed the king in a voice of horror. "Have I indeed that fatal disease? And do you talk of curing it?"

"Doubtless, sire, many die of it as well as of other disorders, but we are sanguine in our hopes and expectations of saving your majesty."

The king made no reply, but turned heavily in his bed and threw the coverlet over his face. A silence ensued which lasted until the return of the physicians, when, finding they made no allusion to his condition, the king addressed them in a cool and offended tone.

"Why," said he, "have you concealed from me the fact of my having smallpox?" This abrupt inquiry petrified them with astonishment, and, unable to frame a proper reply, they stood speechless with alarm and apprehension. "Yes," resumed the king, "but for la Martinière I should have died in ignorance of my danger. I know now the state in which I am, and before long I shall be gathered to my forefathers."

All around him strove to combat this idea and exerted

their utmost endeavors to persuade the royal patient that his disorder had assumed the most favorable shape, and that not a shadow of danger was perceptible, but in vain; for the blow had fallen, and the hapless king, struck with a fatal presentiment of coming ill, turned a deaf ear to all they could advance.

Bordeu, deeply concerned for what had transpired, hastened to announce to the duc de Richelieu the turn which had taken place in the face of affairs. Nothing could exceed the rage with which the news was received. The duke hurried to the king's bedside.

"Is it indeed true, sire," inquired he, "that your majesty doubts of your perfect restoration to health? May I presume to inquire whether any circumstance has occurred to diminish your confidence in your medical attendants?"

"Duc de Richelieu," replied Louis XV., looking as though he would search into his very soul, "I have small-pox."

"Well," returned the duke, "and, as I understand, of a most favorable sort; perhaps it might have been better that la Martinière had said nothing about it. However, it is a malady as readily subdued by art as any other; you must not allow yourself to feel any uneasiness respecting it, science has now so much improved in the treatment of this malady."

"I doubt not its ability to cure others, but me! Indeed, duc de Richelieu, I would much rather face my old parliament than this inveterate disease."

"Your majesty's being able to jest is a good sign."

At this moment, ignorant of all that had taken place, I entered the room; for in the general confusion no person had informed me of it. The moment Louis XV. perceived me he exclaimed in a hollow tone:

"Dearest countess, I have smallpox."

At these words a cry of terror escaped me.

"Surely, sire," exclaimed I, "this is some wandering of

your imagination, and your medical attendants are very wrong to permit you to indulge it for a minute."

"Peace!" returned Louis XV.; "you know not what you say. I have smallpox, I repeat; and, thanks to la Martinière, I now know my real state."

I now perceived whose hand had dealt the blow, and, seeing at once all the consequences of the disclosure, exclaimed in my anger, turning towards la Martinière:

"You have achieved a noble work, indeed, sir; you could not restrain yourself within the bounds of prudence, and you see the state to which you have reduced his majesty."

La Martinière knew not what to reply. The king undertook his defence.

"Blame him not," said he; "but for him I should have quitted this world like a heathen, without making my peace with an offended God."

At these words I fainted in the arms of doctor Bordeu, who with the aid of my attendants carried me to my chamber, and at length succeeded in restoring me. My family crowded around me and sought to afford me that consolation they were in equal need of themselves.

Spite of the orders I had given to admit no person, the duc d'Aiguillon would insist upon seeing me. He exerted his best endeavors to persuade me to arm myself with courage, and, like a true and attached friend, appeared to lose sight of his own approaching fall from power in his ardent desire to serve me.

In this mournful occupation an hour passed away and left my dejected companions sighing over the present and anticipating even worse prospects than those now before them.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Terror of the king—A complication—Filial piety of the princesses—Last interview between madame du Barry and Louis XV.—Conversation with the maréchale de Mirepoix—The chancellor Maupeou—The fragment—Comte Jean.

PERHAPS no person ever entertained so great a dread of death as Louis XV., consequently no one required to be more carefully prepared for the alarming intelligence so abruptly communicated by la Martinière, and which in a manner appeared to sign the king's death-warrant.

To every person who approached him the despairing monarch could utter only the fatal phrase, "I have small-pox!" which in his lips was tantamount to his declaring himself a dead man. Alas! had his malady been confined to smallpox he might still have been spared to our prayers; but unhappily a complication of evils which had long been lurking in his veins burst forth with a violence which, united to his cruel complaint, bade defiance to surgical or medical skill.

Yet, spite of the terror with which the august sufferer contemplated his approaching end, he did not lose sight of the interests of the nation as vested in the person of the dauphin, whom he positively prohibited, as well as his other grandsons, from entering his chamber or even visiting the part of the château he occupied. After this he seemed to divest himself of all further care for sublunary things; no papers were brought for his inspection, nor did he ever more sign any official document.

The next request made by Louis XV. was for his daughters, who presented themselves bathed in tears and vainly striving to repress that grief which burst forth in spite of all their endeavors. The king replied to their

sobs by saying: "My children, I have smallpox; but weep not. "These gentlemen," pointing towards the physicians, "assure me they can cure me." But while uttering this cheerful sentence his eye caught the stern and iron countenance of la Martinière, whose look of cool disbelief seemed to deny the possibility of such an event.

With a view to divert her father from the gloom which all at once came over his features the princesse Adélaïde informed him that she had a letter addressed to him by her sister, madame Louise.

"Let me hear it!" cried the king; "it is, no doubt, some heavenly mission with which she is charged. But who knows?" He stopped, but it was easy to perceive that to the fear of death was added a dread of his well-being in another world. Madame Adélaïde then read the letter with a low voice, while the attendants retired to a respectful distance. All eyes were directed to the countenance of the king in order to read there the nature of its contents, but already had the ravages of his fatal disease robbed his features of every expression save that of pain and suffering.

The princesses now took their stations beside their parent and established themselves as nurses, an office which I can with truth affirm they continued to fill unto the last with all the devotion of the purest filial piety.

On this same day Louis XV. caused me to be sent for. I ran to his bedside trembling with alarm. The various persons engaged in his apartment retired when they saw me, and we were left alone.

"My beloved friend," said the king, "I have smallpox; I am still very ill."

"Nay, sire," interrupted I, "you must not fancy things worse than they are. You will do well, depend upon it, and we shall yet pass many happy days together."

"Do you indeed think so?" returned Louis XV. "May heaven grant your prophecy be a correct one. But see the state in which I now am. Give me your hand."

He took my hand and made me feel the pustules with which his burning cheeks were covered. I know not what effect this touch of my hand might have produced, but the king in his turn patted my face, pushed back the curls which hung negligently over my brow; then, inclining me towards him, drew my head upon his pillow. I submitted to this whim with all the courage I could assume; I even went so far as to be upon the point of bestowing a gentle kiss upon his forehead. But, stopping me, with a mournful air he said: "No, my lovely countess, I am no longer myself; but here is a miniature which has not undergone the same change as its unfortunate master."

I took the miniature, which I placed with respectful tenderness in my bosom, nor have I ever parted with it.

This scene lasted for some minutes, after which I was retiring, when the king called me back, seized my hand, which he tenderly kissed, and then whispered an affectionate "Adieu." This was the last word I ever heard from his lips.

Upon re-entering my apartments I found madame de Mirepoix awaiting me, to whom I related all that had taken place, expressing at the same time my earnest hope of being again summoned ere long to the presence of my friend and benefactor.

"Do not deceive yourself, my dear," said she; "depend upon it, you have had your last interview; you should have employed it more profitably. His portrait! Why, if I mistake not, you have five already. Why did you not carry about with you some deed of settlement ready for signature? He would have denied you nothing at such a moment when, you may rest assured, he knew himself to be taking his last farewell."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed I. "And can you really suppose the king believed he spoke to me for the last time?"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it. I have known him for many a day. He remembers the scene of Metz,

and looks upon you as forming the second edition of the poor duchesse de Châteauroux, who, by the by, was not equal to you in any respect."

I burst into a fit of tears, but not of regret, for having allowed my late interview with the king to pass in so unprofitable a manner. However, the maréchale, misconceiving the cause of this burst of grief, exclaimed: "Come, come; it is too late now, and all your sorrow cannot recall the last half-hour. But, madame du Barry," continued she, "I advise you to commence your packing up at once, that when the grand move comes you may not in your hurry leave anything behind you."

These remarks increased my affliction, but the maréchale had no intention of wounding my feelings, and, worldly-minded as she was, considered all that could be saved out of the wreck as the only subject worthy attention. Meanwhile comte Jean, with a gloomy and desponding air, continued silently with folded arms to pace the room, till all at once, as if suddenly struck by the arguments of madame de Mirepoix, he exclaimed, "The maréchale is right!" and abruptly quitted the apartment, as if to commence his own preparations.

Ere madame de Mirepoix had left me, and she remained till a late hour, the ducs d'Aiguillon and de Cossé arrived, who, although less experienced in their knowledge of the king's character, were yet fully of her opinion respecting my last visit to him.

Scarcely had these visitors withdrawn than I was apprised that the chancellor of France desired to see me. He was admitted, and the first glance of the countenance of M. de Maupeou convinced me that our day of power was rapidly closing.

"Your servant, cousin," said he, seating himself. "At what page of our history have we arrived?"

"By the unusual freedom and effrontery of your manner," answered I, "I should surmise that we have reached the word 'finis.'"

"Oh," replied the chancellor, "I crave your pardon for having omitted my best bow; but, my good cousin, my present visit is a friendly one to advise you to burn your papers with as little delay as possible."

"Thank you for your considerate counsel," said I, coolly, "but I have no papers to destroy. I have neither mixed with any state intrigue nor received a pension from the English government. Nothing will be found in my drawers but some unanswered billets-doux."

"Then as I can do nothing for you, my good cousin, oblige me by giving this paper to the duc d'Aiguillon."

"What is it?" inquired I, with much curiosity.

"Have you forgotten our mutual engagement to support each other, and not to quit the ministry until the other retired also? I have lately been compelled (from perceiving how deeply the duke was manœuvring against me) to send him a copy of this agreement. Under other circumstances I might have availed myself of this writing, but now it matters not; the blow which dismisses me proceeds from other hands than his, and I am willing to leave him the consolation of remaining in power a few days after myself. Give him, then, this useless document. And now farewell, my pretty cousin, let us take a last embrace."

Upon which the chancellor, presuming until the last upon our imaginary relationship, kissed my cheek, and, having put into my hand the paper in question, retired with a profound bow.

This ironical leavetaking left me stupefied with astonishment, and well I presaged my coming disgrace from the absurd mummery the chancellor had thought fit to play off.

Comte Jean, who had seen M. de Maupeou quit the house, entered my apartment to inquire the reason of his visit. Silent and dejected, I allowed my brother-in-law to take up the paper, which he read without any ceremony. "What is the meaning of this scrawl?" cried

comte Iean with one of his usual oaths. "Upon my word, our cousin is a fine fellow," continued he, crushing the paper between his fingers. "I'll engage that he still hopes to keep his place. However, one thing consoles me, and that is that both he and his parliament will soon be sent to the right-about."

Our conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Chamilly, who came to acquaint me that the king was sleeping and did not wish to be again disturbed that night. Remembering my usual omnipotence in the château, I was about, like a true idiot, to prove to Chamilly that the king's interdict did not extend to me, when I was stopped in my purpose by the appearance of the duc d'Aiguillon, and as it was now nearly eleven o'clock at night I could scarcely doubt his being the bearer of some extraordinary message.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The duc d'Aiguillon brings an order for the immediate departure of madame du Barry—The king's remarks recapitulated—The countess holds a privy council—Letter to madame de Mirepoix and the ducs de Cossé and d'Aiguillon—Night of departure—Ruel—Visit from madame de Forcalquier.

SAID I did not expect the duc d'Aiguillon, and the grief which was spread over his features and the large tears which stood in his eyes persuaded me but too plainly that all hope was at an end.

"Is the king dead?" cried I in a stifled voice.

"No, madame," replied he; "Louis XV. still lives; nor is it by any means certain that the misfortune you apprehend is in store for us."

"He sends me from him, then!" exclaimed I, with a convulsive cry, "and my enemies have triumphed."

"His majesty is but of human nature, madame," replied the duke; "he feels himself dangerously ill, dreads the future, and believes that he owes his people a sort of reparation for past errors."

"How, my lord duke," interrupted I, "this grave language in your lips—but no matter. Inform me only at whose desire you state these melancholy facts. Speak, I am prepared for your mission, be it what it may."

"You shall hear everything, madame," replied the duke, leading me to an arm-chair. I seated myself; my sisters-in-law, my niece, and comte Jean stood around me, eagerly waiting the duke's communication. "A few hours after you had been removed from his chamber the king inquired of the princesse Adélaïde whether it were generally known at Paris that he had smallpox. The princess replied in the affirmative, adding:

"'The archbishop of Paris was here twice during yesterday to inquire after you.'

D. B.—28. (433)

"'Yet I belong more properly to the diocese of Chartres,' returned the king, 'and surely M. de Fleury would not interest himself less about me than M. de Beaumont.'

"'They are both truly anxious about you, my dearest

father, and if you would only see them-'

"'No, no!' answered Louis XV.; 'they must not be taken from the duties of their respective dioceses; besides, in case of need I have my grand almoner.'

"Madame Adélaïde did not venture to urge the matter further just then, and after a short interval of silence a message was brought from you inquiring whether you could see the king, to which he himself replied that he felt inclined to sleep and would rather not see any person that night. I was in the chamber, and he very shortly called me to him and said:

"'Duc d'Aiguillon, I have smallpox, and you are aware that there is a sort of etiquette in my family which enjoins my immediately discharging my duties as a Christian.'

"'Yes, sire, if the malady wore a serious aspect; but in your case—'

"'May God grant,' replied he, 'that my disorder be not dangerous; however, it may become so, if it is as yet harmless, and I would fain die as a believer rather than an infidel. I have been a great sinner, doubtless; but I have ever observed Lent with a most scrupulous exactitude. I have caused more than a hundred thousand masses to be said for the repose of unhappy souls; I have respected the clergy and punished the authors of all impious works, so that I flatter myself I have not been a very bad Christian.'

"I listened to his discourse with a heavy heart, yet I still strove to reassure the king respecting his health, of which I assured him there was not the slightest doubt.

"'There is one sacrifice,' said the king in a low and hurried tone, 'that my daughter Louise, her sisters, and the clergy will not be long in exacting from me in the name of etiquette. I recollect the scene of Metz, and it would be highly disagreeable to me to have it repeated at Versailles. Let us therefore take our precautions in time to prevent it. Tell the duchesse d'Aiguillon that she will oblige me by taking the comtesse du Barry to pass two or three days with her at Ruel.'

"'How, sire!' exclaimed I, 'send your dearest friend from you at a time when you most require her cares?'

"'I do not send her away,' answered the king with mournful tenderness; 'I but yield to present necessity; let her submit as she values my happiness, and say to her that I hope and believe her absence will be very short.'"

The duke here ceased his recital, which fully confirmed all my previous anticipations. My female relatives sobbed aloud, while comte Jean, compressing his lips, endeavored to assume that firmness he did not really possess. By a violent effort I forced myself to assume a sort of resignation.

"Am I required to depart immediately?" inquired I.

"No," said the duke; "to leave the château in the middle of the night would be to assume the air of a flight; we had better await the coming day. It will, besides, afford time to apprise the duchess."

When the duc d'Aiguillon was thus gone to arrange for my departure I requested to be left alone. My heart was oppressed, and I felt the need of venting my grief upon some friendly bosom. After a few moments spent in collecting my thoughts I addressed two letters, one to the maréchale de Mirepoix and the other to the duc de Cossé. To the former I wrote an account of my retirement to Ruel, bewailed the sad turn my prospects had assumed, expressed my deep concern for the severe illness of my excellent friend and benefactor, begging of her to defend my character from all unjust attacks, and to allow me to be blamed for no faults but such as I had really been guilty of. I concluded with these words: "I set out at seven o'clock to-morrow morning; the duchesse d'Aiguil-

lon will conduct me to Ruel, where I shall remain until I am ordered elsewhere."

To the duke I merely sent a short account of my present prospects, hour of departure, etc. And, my feelings somewhat relieved by the penning of these epistles, I threw myself upon a couch to await the morning. Upon awaking I received the following note from the duchesse d'Aiguillon:

"Madame la Comtesse—I owe his majesty many thanks for the pleasing yet mournful task he has allotted me. Your kindness to my family, independently of my private regard for you, gives you the surest claim of my best services during this afflicting period. Let me beseech of you not to despair, but cheerfully anticipate brighter days.

"I will call for you at seven o'clock, and if you approve of it we will use my carriage. Ruel is entirely at your disposal and

that of your family."

This note was truly characteristic of its amiable writer, who at court passed for a cold-hearted, frigid being, whilst in reality the warm feelings of her excellent heart were reserved for her chosen friends.

I have never admired those general lovers who profess to love everyone, nor do I feel quite sure it is a very strong recommendation to say a person is beloved by all who know her. Read now a striking contrast to the short but sympathizing billet of madame d'Aiguillon in the following heartless letter from the maréchale de Mirepoix, which was put into my hands as I was ascending the carriage:

"My Lovely Countess—I am all astonishment! Can it be possible that you are to quit Versailles? You are right in saying you have been the friend of everyone, and those who could speak ill of you are to be pitied for not having had better opportunities of understanding your real character. But fear not; the dauphiness is virtue personified, and the dauphin equally perfect. Everything promises a peaceful and indulgent reign, should we have the misfortune to lose his present majesty. Still there will always be a great void left at Versailles. As far as I am con-

cerned, I have passed so much of my time with you that I cannot imagine what I shall do with my evenings; it will cost me much at my age to alter habits and customs now so long fixed and settled. But such is life: nothing certain, nothing stable. We should imitate cats in our attachments, and rather identify ourselves with the house than the possessor of it. I trust you have secured an ample provision for the future; neglect not the present: to-morrow may come in vain for you.

"Be sure you let me know the spot to which you permanently retire, and I will endeavor to see you as frequently as my engagements will admit. Adieu, ma belle petite."

Spite of the bitterness of my feelings, this letter drew a smile to my lips; the allusion to cats which had escaped the maréchale exactly applied to her own character, of which I had been warned before I became acquainted with her; but her protestations of warm and unalterable attachment had gained my confidence, and I allowed myself to be guided implicitly by her.

The duchesse d'Aiguillon was waiting for me while I perused the above letter; at length with a sigh I prepared to quit that palace of delights where I had reigned absolute mistress. I cast a mournful look around me on those splendid walks, fountains, and statues, worthy the gardens of Armida, but where there reigned at this early hour a sort of gloomy silence, whilst in that chamber where love had wellnigh deified me and recognized me as queen of France lay extended the monarch so lately my protector and friend.

It was on Wednesday, the 5th of May, that I took my seat in the carriage of the duchesse d'Aiguillon, accompanied by my sister-in-law and the vicomtesse Adolphe, who would not forsake me. Bischi remained with madame d'Hargicourt, whose duties detained her with the comtesse d'Artois. Her husband also remained at Versailles, while comte Jean and his son proceeded to Paris. I will not attempt to describe the emotions with which I quitted my magnificent suite of apartments and traversed the halls and staircases already crowded by

persons anxiously awaiting the first intimation of the king's decease. I was wrapped in my pelisse, and effectually eluded observation. It has been said that I left Versailles at four o'clock in the morning, but that was a mere invention on the part of my servants to baffle the curiosity of those who might have annoyed me by their presence.

We pursued our way in mournful reflection, whilst madame d'Aiguillon, with her wonted goodness, sought by every means to distract me from the dejection in which I was buried. Her husband, who remained with the king, engaged to write me a true account of all that happened during my absence, and I shall very shortly present you with a specimen of the fidelity with which he performed his promise. The duchess did the honors of Ruel.

"Here," said she, "the great cardinal Richelieu loved to repose himself from the bustle and turmoil of a court."

"I think," answered I, "it would have been less a favorite with his eminence had it been selected for his abode on the eve of his disgrace."

Immediately upon my arrival I retired to bed, for fatigue had so completely overpowered me that I fell into a heavy slumber, from which I did not awake till the following day, when I found the duchesse d'Aiguillon, my sister-in-law, Geneviève Mathon, and Henriette seated by my bed; the sight of them was cheering and gratifying proof of my not being as yet abandoned by all the world.

I arose, and we were just about to take our places at table when madame de Forcalquier arrived. I must confess that her presence was an agreeable surprise to me. I was far from reckoning on her constancy in friendship, and her present conduct proved her worthy of her excellent friend, madame Boncault, whose steady attachment I had so frequently heard extolled. The sight of her imparted fresh courage to me, and I even resumed my usual high spirits, and in the sudden turn my ideas had taken was childish enough to express my regrets for the loss of

my downy and luxurious bed at Versailles, complaining of the woful difference between it and the one I had slept on at Ruel.

The duchesse d'Aiguillon, who must have pitied the puerility of such a remark, gently endeavored to reconcile me to it by reminding me that both the marquise de Pompadour and the cardinal de Richelieu had reposed upon that very couch.

I endeavored to return some sportive reply, but my thoughts had flown back to Versailles, and my momentary exhilaration was at an end. Tears rose to my eyes and choked my attempts at conversation. I therefore begged the duchess would excuse me, and retired to my apartment until I could compose myself; but the kind and attentive friend to whose hospitality I was then confided needed no further mention of my hard couch, but caused the best bed Ruel contained to be prepared for me by the time I again pressed my pillow.

This same evening brought M. de Cossé, who could no longer repress his impatience to assure me of his entire devotion. He appeared on this occasion, if possible, more tender and more respectful in his manner of evincing it than ever.

We supped together without form or ceremony, the party consisting of mesdames d'Aiguillon, de Forcalquier, and myself, mademoiselle du Barry, and the vicomtesse Adolphe, the prince de Soubise and the duc de Cossé. But the meal passed off in sorrowful silence. Each of us seemed to abstain from conversation as if the slightest remark might come fraught with some painful allusion. On the following day I received the letter from the duc d'Aiguillon which you will find in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XLV.

The duc d'Aiguillon's first letter—The maréchale de Mirepoix—A second letter from the duc d'Aiguillon—Numerous visitors.

Y Much-Esteemed Friend—I promised you upon your departure to inform you of all that happened, and although the task is a mournful one, I will do my best to acquit myself with zeal and sincerity, and each evening I will write you an

exact detail of all that has occurred during the day. The king remains much as you left him, and you must know that already his medical attendants differ in their opinion respecting him—Lemonnier utterly despairing of his recovery, while Bordeu is most sanguine that he shall be enabled to restore him to health. La Martinière persists in his assertion that the attention of the king should be immediately directed to his spiritual concerns. The archbishop of Paris remains until called for in the antechamber, and the princesses never leave the bedside of their august parent.

"The king spoke with me concerning you for some time this morning, and I can assure you you are the first object in his thoughts; he has begged of me never to forsake you, and has deigned to repose in me the enviable post of your future protector. 'I bequeath my beloved friend to your fidelity,' added the suffering prince. I took advantage of this opportunity to remark that I looked upon your quitting Versailles as too precipitate and premature a step. 'No, no,' replied the king, 'I have acted for the best. I have once been deceived as to my condition, and I would willingly prevent being again taken by surprise. Tell my beloved and excellent counters how truly I love her,' and, hearing the prince de Soubise mention his design of supping at Ruel, he charged him to embrace you for him.

"The dauphin still remains secluded in his apartment, but I know that he keeps up a regular correspondence with madame Victoire, whose letters, after being immersed in vinegar, are carried to the comte de Muy, who fumigates them previously to allowing them to reach the hands of the dauphin.

"I am, etc., etc.

"Versailles, May 5, 1774, nine o'clock, evening."

Upon awaking the following morning I again received news of the king, who was stated to have passed a good night, and even la Martinière seemed inclined to hope. As yet, then, there were no safe grounds for abandoning me, and about two o'clock in the afternoon I was favored with a visit from madame de Mirepoix, who, running up to me, exclaimed with her usual vivacity:

"Oh, my dear creature! how I have longed to see you!" and then leading me into another chamber, she added:

"Do you know I quite missed you? As I wrote you, my time hung heavily on my hands. What in the world will become of me if I am compelled to resign the delightful hours granted to the envied few who are permitted the entrée to the petits appartements? For you see, my dear, the dauphiness will be far from bestowing that honor upon me. I am too old to form one of her coterie, and I shall be laid aside like the rest of the antiquities of the château. By the way," continued the voluble maréchale, "there is already a great cabal in the château respecting the formation of a new ministry, in which, besides desiring lucrative posts for themselves, all are anxious to introduce their private friends; in the midst of so many absorbing interests you appear to be already forgotten, which, by the way, is no bad thing for you. Your best plan is to remain perfectly tranquil." Then rapidly passing to her most prevailing idea, this excellent friend proceeded to inquire what the king had bestowed on me as a parting present, "for," said she, "he would not certainly permit you to leave Versailles empty-handed."

"It is a point," replied I, "that neither his majesty nor I once thought of."

"Then such an omission proves him a vile egotist and you a prodigious simpleton," answered she; "and were I in your place I would commission the duc d'Aiguillon to make a direct demand for a future provision for you; you really should see about this and secure to yourself a noble establishment for yourself and your friends, who ought

not to suffer for your overstrained delicacy. Look at the duc de Choiseul, who has kept a regular court at Chanteloup, and never wanted for a train of courtiers at it."

After this lesson of worldly wisdom the excellent maréchale gave me a friendly kiss, returned to her carriage, and I saw her no more during my stay at Ruel.

The evening brought with it a second letter from the duc d'Aiguillon. It was as follows:

"Madame-I hasten to acquaint you with the pleasing information of his majesty being considerably better; his strength appears to have returned, and he himself, in the consciousness of improving health, expressed aloud his regret for having been so hasty in advising your removal from him. He has continually repeated: 'How weak and selfish of me thus to afflict my dearest countess! Would you not advise me, my friend, to request her immediate return?' Of course, my reply was in the affirmative. His majesty then put the same question to the duc de Richelieu, who answered that in his opinion it was the best plan he could decide upon. The bulletin signed by the different physicians accompanies this: it leaves me nothing to add but to recommend your bearing with patience this temporary absence from court, to which you will ere long return more idolized, more sought after than ever. The duc de la Vrillière and the abbé Terray present the assurance of their unbounded respect and devotion. etc., etc."

The duchess, my sister-in-law, and niece shared the joy of such gratifying intelligence, and the ensuing day brought a concourse of visitors to Ruel; indeed, anyone might have supposed that fresh swarms of flatterers and courtiers had been created only to swell my number of humble and obsequious adorers. I bestowed on each unmeaning guest a smiling welcome, for indeed my heart was too light and I felt too happy to be enabled to frown even upon those who, when the storm appeared near, had basely deserted me.

It was amusing enough to see with what zeal any person whom I had previously recommended was assisted by the various ministers in the pursuit of his object;

the petit saint found himself all at once at leisure to pay his respects to me. He confirmed all the kind messages sent me by the king through the duc d'Aiguillon. Madame de Mirepoix, who had visited me the preceding evening, reserved her next call for the following day, but a few hours effected a cruel change in my fortune.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A third letter from the duke—The king receives extreme unction—Letter from madame Victoire to the dauphin—M. de Machault—A promenade with the duc de Cossé—Kind attention from the prince des Deux Ponts—A fourth letter from the duc d'Aiguillon—Comte Jean says farewell—M. d'Aiguillon's fifth letter, containing an account of the death of Louis XV.—The duc de la Vrillière—The lettre de cachet—Letter to the queen—Departure for the abbey of pont aux Dames.

HE account received in the evening from the duc d'Aiguillon I shall not transcribe, as it was merely a repetition of the good tidings of the morning. The day following still brought a continuation of favorable accounts, but the next letter was in these words:

"Madame and Most Honored Friend—Arm yourself with courage; the king is extremely ill, and I ought not to conceal from you that serious apprehensions are entertained for his life; he has passed a wretched night. His daughters, who never quitted his bedside, whispered to him that the archbishop of Paris and his grand almoner were in the anteroom if he desired to see them. The king did not seem to hear their words, but about three o'clock in the morning he called the duc de Duras, whom he bade inquire whether M. Mandaux were in the château, and, if so, to apprise him he wished to speak with him.

"At these words the princesses and all who heard them burst into a fit of weeping, which was interrupted only by the arrival of the confessor, who, approaching the bedside of the penitent, held a conference with him of nearly a quarter of an hour. This being concluded, the king in a low and firm voice inquired for his almoner. The latter soon presented himself, anxious to discharge the duties of his sacred office. His majesty kept continusually repeating to his afflicted children: 'My daughters, why should what I am now about to do agitate or alarm you? You are well aware that, as I have smallpox, the etiquette established in my family compels me to receive the last solemn rites of the church, and I but acquit myself of an obligation in submitting to it.'

"The tone in which the king spoke convinced his attendants that he rather strove to reassure himself than his children by the persuasion that the receiving extreme unction was not so much the consequence of his own dangerous state as a mere act of obedience to an established custom. It was then decided that the sacred ceremony should take place at seven o'clock in the morning; and here arose some little embarrassment: the ecclesiastics insisting upon the necessity of the king's making some striking and open atonement for what they were pleased to term the scandal of his private life.

"The king's chamber now presented a picture at once solemn and gloomy. Grouped together on one side of the bed might be seen the different noblemen in attendance upon his majesty; a little removed stood the clergy, concealed from the invalid by the closely-drawn curtains; in the midst of these contending parties were the princesses, going from one to the other, vainly seeking by mild and gentle mediation to produce a satisfactory arrangement. It was at length understood that on account of the extreme weakness of the invalid the grand almoner should pronounce in his name a kind of honorable apology for past offences.

"You can scarcely imagine, madame, the universal consternation spread throughout the château by the information that the king was about to receive the last rites of his church. The terror and alarm became overpowering for a while, but, subsiding into a more religious feeling, crowds of persons followed with solemn reverence the holy procession as it passed along bearing the holy sacrament to their expiring monarch. At the moment when it was administered the grand almoner, turning towards all present, pronounced the following words in the king's name:

"'Gentlemen, the weakness of his majesty preventing him from expressing himself, he has commanded me to inform you that although he is responsible to God alone for his conduct, he yet regrets having caused any scandal to his people by the irregularities of his life, that he sincerely repents of his sins; and, should Providence restore him to health, he purposes living henceforward in all the virtue and morality of his youth, in the defence and maintenance of religion, in preserving a true faith, and in watching over the best interests of his people.'

"Yours, madame, etc., etc."

I learned also through another channel that, according to custom, forty hours' prayer had been enjoined in every church in France to implore the mercy of Heaven for the king. I heard, too, that the shrine of Sainte-Geneviève had been displayed for the veneration of true believers.

I passed a miserable night, dreaming of graves, winding-sheets, and funeral-torches, from which I awoke only to receive the morning's despatches. Alas! the news but confirmed the distressing state of the king. The very solitude in which I was left at Ruel might alone have served to convince me of my misfortune; for, with the exception of the duc de Cossé, no person came near us. M. de Cossé invited me to walk with him in the garden; I accepted the arm of this noble friend, and we directed our steps towards the wood. When we were there secure from interruption the duke inquired what were my plans for the future.

"How can I tell you?" answered I. "What is henceforward to be my fate is better known to our future queen than to myself."

"That is precisely what I dread," replied M. de Cossé. "Unfortunately you have deeply offended the queen-elect, who has irritated her husband's mind against you; and then the Choiseul faction will in all probability come into power."

"I see all this," returned I, "and am prepared for whatever may happen."

"I admire your calmness in a moment like the present!" cried the duke; "but have a care. Perhaps the best thing would be to remove you beyond the reach of the first shock of court displeasure. In your place I would request passports from the duc d'Aiguillon and travel into England."

"Oh, speak not of such a thing, I conjure you," interrupted I. "I have a horror of such journeys, and would much rather trust to the generosity of the dauphiness. She is about to become a great queen, while I shall be a creature so humiliated and abased that the very difference between our situations will be a sufficient vengeance in her eyes."

We returned to the house, and had scarcely entered when M. de Palchelbel, plenipotentiary to the prince des Deux Ponts, was announced.

"M. de Palchelbel!" cried I, extending my hand; "what good wind brings you here?"

"I have been honored by the commands of the prince, my master, madame," replied he, "to bring you the assurances of his unalterable friendship, and to say, further, that whenever you feel dissatisfied with your residence in France you will find at Deux Ponts an asylum which the most earnest endeavors of the prince, my gracious patron, will strive to render agreeable to you."

I was much affected by this mark of generous regard on the part of prince Charles Auguste, and, turning quickly towards the duke, I exclaimed:

"What think you of all this? Will you henceforward believe those self-dubbed philosophers who assert that friendship is unknown to royalty? You have here a proof of the contrary. For my own part, M. de Palchelbel," continued I, turning towards the minister, "I am much gratified by your message and entreat of you to thank his royal highness most sincerely for me. I will write to him myself on the subject, but beg of you to repeat that, kind as are his offers, I cannot accept of them, but shall certainly remain in France until the new sovereign commands or permits me to quit it."

I afterwards repeated to the minister of Deux Ponts what I had previously stated in the garden to M. de Cossé, and had the satisfaction of hearing madame d'Aiguillon approve of my sentiments.

When I retired to my apartment I was followed by my niece.

"How happy are you, dear aunt," said she, "to preserve such friends in your present troubles!"

"I owe them," replied I, "to my simplicity and candor."

"Will you not retire to Germany?"

"Certainly not!" answered I.

"Yet it would be better to allow the first burst of displeasure on the part of the dauphiness to pass over."

"Who gave you this counsel, my dear niece? I am

quite sure it does not originate in yourself."

"I had promised not to tell," answered she; "but if you insist upon it I must confess that I was persuaded by the prince de Condé and M. de Soubise to urge you to follow it."

"Do they then wish for my absence?" cried I, angrily. "Only for your own sake, dearest aunt."

"I thank them, but my resolution is formed to commit myself entirely to Providence in this melancholy affair."

The day passed on, and with feverish impatience I waited the arrival of the next courier. He came at length and confirmed my worst fears. The king was entirely given over by his physicians, and his dissolution was hourly expected. The letter containing these mournful tidings concluded thus

"I have just seen comte Jean. He is here incognito. We had entirely forgotten that passports would be necessary. However, I have now furnished him with four, for England, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. The count is far from partaking of your sense of security, and is wisely anxious (as I think) of shielding himself from the first burst of royal vengeance. The duchess has informed me of your refusal of an asylum at Deux Ponts, and, while I admire your courage, permit me to add that you should rather have listened to the dictates of prudence than magnanimity under present circumstances."

The following morning at an early hour comte Jean entered my chamber, saying:

"I understand the king is dead. Have you heard anything of it?"

"Were the report correct," answered I, "I should have known it ere the intelligence reached Paris."

"Well, living or dead, I am advised to keep out of the way, and this night will see me on my journey from Paris. Will you accompany me?"

"No," replied I; "I have refused travelling with a much more creditable companion than yourself."

"There you are wrong, then; for, depend upon it, a cloister will be your fate. At any rate, my business here is at an end. The new monarch is young and attached to his wife, and my daughter-in-law is too great a simpleton to be turned to any account at court."

My brother-in-law then requested I would furnish him with money. I gave him what I had, and placed in his hands diamonds to the value of thirty thousand francs. He was very anxious to obtain all my jewels, under pretence of conveying them safely out of the kingdom, but this I was too wise to agree to. He would have staked them at the first gaming-table he met with. We separated without much emotion on either side. He next took leave of Chon and his daughter-in-law. The former wept bitterly, for she was a most excellent and amiable girl, but the latter, who knew but too much of the villany of her father-in-law, could scarcely repress her joy at his departure. Comte Jean perceived it, and, according to his brutal custom, indulged in a coarse jest at her expense: for one of his maxims was to hold all women in sovereign contempt but such as could be useful to him. For my own part his absence gave me something like a feeling of pleasure; his presence was wearisome to me: it was like the dregs of the cup which had intoxicated my senses.

During the day several false reports arrived of the death of the king, but at length, about half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, I received the following letter:

"Madame—You have lost your best friend and I an excellent master. At three o'clock this day his majesty breathed his last. I can scarcely describe to you the horrors of his deathbed. The princesses Adélaïde and Sophie braved the frightful contagion to the last, and never quitted him till the last spark had flown. Alas! with the exception of themselves, every attendant openly expressed weariness and disgust,

"For several days the physicians have forbidden the windows to be opened, and those condemned to inhale the pestilential vapor of the room vainly sought to counteract them by every powerful fumigation. Alas! madame, what is a king when he can no longer grasp the sceptre? How great a leveller is Death! The prelates had abandoned the sick-chamber and left a simple curé of the chapel to take their place; the lords-in-waiting and other officers shrunk from the duties of their offices, and, with their eyes fixed on a timepiece, eagerly awaited the hour which should free them from it. The princesses, who perceived this impatience, durst make no complaint, while the king, occasionally recovering his senses, uttered broken sentences expressive of the religious terror which had seized his mind. At length, at a few minutes past three o'clock, Lemonnier, in his capacity of first physician, said, after laying his hand upon the heart of the patient and placing a glass before his lips, 'The king is dead.' At these words all present strove with indecent haste to quit the chamber: not a single sigh, not one regret was heard. The princesses were carried insensible to their apartments.

"The extinction of a bougie which had been placed in a certain window announced the accession of the dauphin ere the duc d'Aumont had informed him of the decease of his august grandsire."

This letter wrung from me some bitter tears, as well for the king, who had so lavishly treated me, as for myself. What would now be my fate? All my brilliant prospects were buried in the coffin of my late protector.

The duc d'Aiguillon arrived at Ruel about midnight; he, as well as the other ministers who had been about the late monarch during his last illness, being prohibited by etiquette from following the present monarch to Choisy, whither the whole of the royal family had retired for a few days. He told us that the duc d'Aumont having commanded la Martinière to proceed with the embalming of the royal corpse, that physician replied: "Certainly, my lord, it shall be done if you command it; but in that case the duties of your office compel you to receive his majesty's bowels in a golden dish, and I protest that such is the state of the body that of all who may assist at the operation not one will survive eight days. It is for your grace to determine what shall be done."

M. d'Aumont thought no more of embalming his late master, but gave orders for the body being immediately placed in a leaden coffin, from which there still issued frightful effluvia.

Up to the moment of my quitting Ruel madame de Mirepoix gave me no token of recollection. I heard that she and the prince de Beauvau were reconciled, and for her sake I rejoiced at it. No person came near us the whole of the day, with the exception of M. de Cossé, and I sat in hourly expectation of some order from court. At length we descried a travelling carriage with six horses proceeding at a rapid pace up the avenue. "I know that livery!" exclaimed I. "'Tis that of my humble adorer, my obsequious slave, my friend at court, the duc de la Vrillière, commonly called le petit saint. You see that the good soul could not delegate to another the pleasing task of arresting me; but permit me to retire to my apartment; it is fitting he should seek me there if he has any communication to make to me." The duchess approved my resolution, and the duc de la Vrillière having been introduced into the salon, after the first compliments, requested to see me that he might acquaint me with the king's pleasure.

Mademoiselle du Barry undertook to inform me of the duke's arrival.

"You were not mistaken, dear sister," said she; "the duc de la Vrillière is the bearer of the king's orders respecting you; but compose yourself, I beseech you."

"Fear not," said I; "I am as calm as you would have me. Tell the vile dissembler—I mean the duke—I await him."

M. Tartuffe was but a faint copy of le petit saint as he presented himself before me. His manners still retained part of their former servility, but there was a lurking smile about him which proved how well he was pleased with the part he had to perform.

He approached me with lingering steps and an air of

mysterious importance, while a sort of sardonic grin contradicted the sorrow he endeavored to force into his countenance. For my own part I caused the folding-doors to be thrown open, and, advancing ceremoniously, stood to receive the orders of the king. I bowed stiffly and silently, and with something like a malicious satisfaction I witnessed the embarrassment into which my cool and collected manner threw him.

"Madame," said he at last, "I have a painful duty to perform: in a word, I am the bearer of a lettre de cachet." "Well, sir!" said I, tranquilly.

"Madame, I must request you to believe how greatly I regret the task imposed upon me, but my duty and obedience to the king—"

"Would enable you to strangle your nearest relative. All that is well known; but, in the name of all that is base, cowardly, and unmanly, could no one but you be found to remind a distressed and afflicted woman that she has lost her only friend and support?"

"Madame, I repeat, obedience, necessity—"

"Enough, sir. I pity you."

"Madame, you outrage the king in my person."

"No, sir; I respect the king too highly to believe that there could ever be any relation between him and one who is too contemptible to remind me that he was but a few days back the most cringing of my servile slaves."

Le petit saint, boiling with rage, with an unsteady hand unfolded, and read in a trembling voice, the following words:

"Madame la Comtesse du Barry—For reasons which have for their object the preservation of the tranquillity of my kingdom and the prevention of any state secrets confided to you being promulgated, I send this order for your immediate removal to pont aux Dames, accompanied by one female attendant only, and under the escort of the exempt who has the necessary orders. This measure is by no means intended to be either disagreeable or of long duration. I therefore pray God to have you in his holy keeping.

(Signed) LOUIS."

"That, madame," continued the duke, "is his majesty's pleasure, and you have nothing to do but to submit."

"Your advice was not asked, my lord," returned I. "I honor and obey the king's slightest wish, but your presence is no longer requisite; you will therefore be pleased to rid me of it."

The duke, resuming his air of mock humility, bowed low and departed.

When I was alone I must confess a few tears escaped me, but I wiped them away; my resolution was taken.

The duchesse d'Aiguillon and my female friends hastened to question me relative to the duke's visit. I showed them the lettre de cachet, which confirmed the misfortune they had suspected from seeing Hamond, who was to be my escort, waiting in the anteroom to conduct me to the abbey of pont aux Dames, near Meaux, the place of my exile. They all evinced the utmost sorrow, and both Chon and my niece protested that, with the king's permission, they would willingly attend me in my seclusion. I felt grateful for this mark of attachment; then sending for the exempt, I inquired whether I might be allowed sufficient time to write a letter and cause a few necessary preparations to be made. "Madame," replied he, "my only orders are to accompany you to pont aux Dames; the hour of departure is left to yourself."

I then penned a few hasty lines to the king indicative of my wishes for the happiness and prosperity of his reign, of my ready obedience to his commands, and of my earnest wishes that my sister-in-law and niece might be permitted to visit me. This letter I was promised should be punctually delivered. I had now the painful duty to perform of choosing between Henriette and Geneviève, as only one attendant was allowed me at pont aux Dames. Henriette pleaded her claim as my servant, while the excellent Geneviève timidly urged her early friendship.

"Let chance decide it!" cried I. They drew lots, and Geneviève was selected.

454 MEMOIRS OF JEANNE VAUBERNIER

We reached pont aux Dames in the middle of the night. It was a miserable-looking place, which took its date from the time of Saint-Louis or Charlemagne, for aught I know. What a contrast met my eyes between this ruinous old building, its bare walls, wooden seats, and gloomy casements, and the splendor of Versailles or Choisy! All my firmness forsook me. I threw myself weeping into the arms of Geneviève.

A courier had announced my intended arrival, and I found all the good sisters impatient to see me. What eager curiosity did the pious nuns evince to behold one of whom they had heard so much even in their quiet retreat, and how many questions had I to reply to from those who had the courage to address me! Alas! I, of all the throng assembled, was the most anxious for quiet and solitude.

I was lodged in the best apartments, which, however, magnificent the good people of pont aux Dames might consider them, were not on a par with the granaries of Lucienne. But complaint was useless, and I could only resign myself to what was offered me.







